

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



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THE EXTENSION OF TRAGEDY IN AFGHANISTAN

By Nita Palmer

On October 15, US President Barack Obama announced that US troops would remain in Afghanistan through 2017, flying in the face of earlier claims that “the longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion.”

The extension of the military mission in Afghanistan will see 9,800 US troops remain in the country until early 2017 and 5,500 troops remain thereafter, stationed at bases in Kabul, Baghram, Jalalabad and Kandahar. Prior to this announcement, only a small embassy-based force was set to remain there. Following the US lead, the UK also pledged to keep its 450 troops in the country. Other NATO countries including Germany are looking at extending their missions as well.

Yet these numbers do not reflect the full extent of US/NATO presence in the country. In May 2015, Foreign Policy magazine reported that there were about three times as many US military contractors in Afghanistan as soldiers – about 30,000 of them, essentially operating as a paramilitary force. These estimates don't even account for contractors supporting the CIA, USAID, and other government agencies. If the number of contractors in the country remains roughly the same, it will put the total US/NATO force in the country after 2017 at roughly 40,000.

In light of this announcement, which will undoubtedly cost more lives of both

Afghans and foreign forces, let us make an assessment of what kind of progress has been achieved in Afghanistan in the last decade and a half in terms of stopping terrorism and bringing a better quality of life to Afghans.

The Taliban and ISIS on the Rise in Afghanistan

In his announcement Obama stated that, “as commander in chief I will not allow Afghanistan to be used as safe haven for terrorists to attack our nation again.” Combating terrorism has been one of the supposed main objectives of the war in Afghanistan, yet the presence of terrorist and extremist organizations has been steadily rising in the fourteen years that the US and NATO have been occupying the country.

The Taliban have been gaining strength since they were ousted in 2001, and now control several districts in Afghanistan, operating as a de facto government in those areas. They recently took over and held Kunduz, Afghanistan's fifth-largest city, for fifteen days. On October 13, the New York Times reported that “Previous Taliban attacks on major population centers had been limited to suicide attacks by individuals or small numbers of attackers. But in Kunduz, the Taliban appeared well trained and organized, making effective use of weapons like high-tech sniper rifles and armored vehicles they had captured.”

The US military and political establishment is blaming the capture of Kunduz on the draw-down of NATO troops and the

lack of training and preparedness of the Afghan National Security Forces, using this as justification for the extension of the military mission. But in truth, the Taliban maintained a significant presence in Afghanistan even at the height of the NATO mission there, and an extension of the mission is unlikely to defeat them now. The Taliban have been able to maintain and expand their presence in the country despite intense pressure from foreign forces because of support from the Afghan people, many of whom support the Taliban's fight against foreign troops in their country.

Not only has the presence of the US and NATO not defeated the Taliban, however, but the instability it has created in the country and the region as a whole has allowed the Islamic State (ISIS) to gain a foothold in Afghanistan. Between June and September 2015, ISIS launched attacks in Farah, Helmand and Nangarhar provinces. They have also engaged in clashes with the Taliban, who have condemned the group's brutality and demanded the foreign fighters leave Afghanistan. ISIS is now yet another deadly force with which war-weary Afghans have to contend.

Murder by Drone

According to official policy, the US/NATO combat mission in Afghanistan has ended, leaving troops there only for counterterrorism operations and to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces. But what exactly is the ‘assistance’ the US and NATO are providing to the Afghan National Security Forces? To date, it has included coalition soldiers ‘advising’ on the front lines of battles with the Taliban and conducting air strikes at the request of Afghan forces. Make no mistake, US and NATO forces are still very much involved in combat in Afghanistan.

As for counterterrorism operations, the New York Times explains, “[Obama’s] announcement will allow the military to continue carrying out secret operations focused primarily in Eastern Afghanistan against people it suspects of being militant leaders. Those operations are intended to follow a ‘lighter footprint’ model of targeted strikes.”

This so-called ‘lighter footprint’ model was explained in more detail by online news source The Intercept, which in October published a series of articles titled “The Drone Papers” detailing the use of drones for assassinations by the US military and CIA. “The Drone Papers” were written based on classified documents leaked to The Intercept. One of the stories, ‘Manhunting in the Hindu Kush’, reveals the details of Operation Haymaker, a US military mission which was carried out between 2011 and 2013 with the objective of killing off key leaders of the Taliban and al Qaeda living in Afghanistan’s eastern most mountain range. The classified documents reveal that in one 14-month period, 56 airstrikes were carried out, killing 35 suspects. However, these strikes also killed 219 others who were not specifically targeted. Some of these were innocent bystanders, shrugged off as ‘collateral damage’ when a suspect was targeted. Others were wrongly identified as the suspect by an operator working from a screen thousands of miles away. This ‘lighter footprint’ model may keep US soldiers out of harm’s way, but it shows a cold and callous disregard for the hundreds of innocent Afghans killed in these strikes.

US War Crimes in Afghanistan: Kunduz Hospital Bombing

Not only have the US and NATO failed to stop terrorism in Afghanistan, they have brought their own form of terrorism to the Afghan people through drone strikes, checkpoint shootings, and nighttime raids on homes. During the recent Taliban siege of Kunduz, twenty-two patients and

aid workers were killed in a US bombing of the Medcins Sans Frontieres (MSF) trauma hospital. According to MSF’s press release, “From 2:08 AM until 3:15 AM local time [on October 3], MSF’s trauma hospital in Kunduz was hit by a series of aerial bombing raids at approximately 15 minute intervals. The main central hospital building, housing the intensive care unit, emergency rooms, and physiotherapy ward, was repeatedly hit very precisely during each aerial raid, while surrounding buildings were left mostly untouched.”

The bombing occurred despite MSF providing GPS coordinates of the hospital to Afghan, US and NATO forces before and during the attack. While Obama provided a hollow apology to MSF and the families of civilians killed, the US military has tried to justify their actions by claiming



Doctors Without Borders walks inside the charred remains of their hospital after it was hit repeatedly by U.S. airstrikes in Kunduz, Afghanistan. October 16, 2015.

the Taliban had taken over the facility and were shooting from it, despite testimony from MSF staff that this was not the case. MSF has called for an independent investigation into the incident as a war crime. Under international humanitarian law, medical facilities are to be protected from attack unless there is clear evidence that it is being used to support military operations – which MSF staff have repeatedly said was not the case. Even if it had been, international law would require MSF to be notified that there was a problem before any attack took place. It seems that mounting evidence is pointing to the US having committed at least one war crime in Afghanistan.

US/NATO Legacy in Afghanistan:

Death, Destruction and Chaos

One of the hallmark goals of the war in Afghanistan has been to improve human rights in the country. But after a decade and a half of war, there is precious little to show in terms of real improvements to life for Afghans. Despite the hundreds of billions spent on the war, the access to the most basic necessities of life remain out of reach for the majority of Afghans. The United Nations’ World Health Organization (WHO) reports that only 30% of Afghans have access to improved sanitation facilities such as flush toilets or even outhouses. Just 22% have access to improved drinking water sources. The lack of these most basic facilities is a major cause of disease and a huge contributor to Afghanistan’s high child mortality rate.

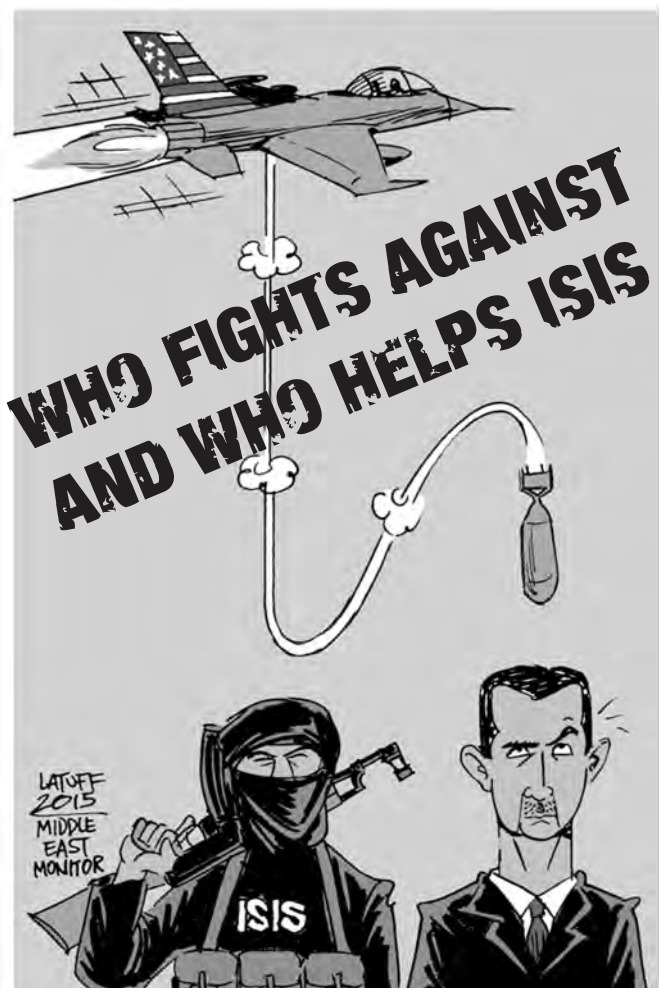
Forty-two percent of the population still lives on less than a dollar a day, according to USAID. With unemployment sitting at around 40%, many struggle to feed their families. For the tens of thousands of families whose primary breadwinner – often the husband – has been killed in the war, the situation is even more dire. Children as young as five often must work to support their families. Many women are forced into begging or prostitution in order to feed their children.

The fighting between the Taliban and NATO troops, as well as the appearance of ISIS

forces in Afghan towns has forced millions to leave their homes. Over four millions Afghans are refugees. After Syrians, Afghans are the second-largest contingent of refugees arriving in Europe. There are also hundreds of thousands of Afghans displaced within their own country, living in squalid conditions in refugee camps on the outskirts of major cities like Kabul.

After a decade and a half of occupying Afghanistan, the US and NATO have fundamentally failed to bring any kind of meaningful improvement to the lives of ordinary Afghans. Yes, some schools have been built here and there, but as we reported in the last issue of Fire This Time,

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*By Manuel Yepe**

According to geopolitical analyst Steven MacMillan, editor of *The Analyst Report*, in a recent article for digital journal *New Eastern Outlook* published on October 12, "Washington is rapidly losing the microscopic amount of respect it had around the world, as US propaganda is becoming more childish by the week. Any rational person who is even remotely informed just sits back in amazement at the volume of deceptive, deceitful, and outright ludicrous statements constantly spewing from the mouths of top US officials."

One of the latest comical episodes was when the US President, Barack Obama, actually tried to argue that Russian airstrikes against the so-called Islamic State (ISIS/IS/ISIL) are only strengthening the terrorist organization.

The U.S. President said that "The moderate opposition in Syria is one that, if we're ever going to have a political transition, we need. And Russian policy is driving those folks underground or creating a situation

in which they are [debilitated], and it's only strengthening ISIL."

In the real world however, Russia has been severely weakening ISIS and fellow extremist forces in Syria through bombing terrorist command centers, weapons warehouses, training camps and other enemy positions.

Above all, Russian airstrikes have illuminated the complete sham of the US-led coalition against ISIS, as Russian airstrikes have been far more effective already, compared to Washington's campaign, and have created doubt as to the real intentions of the Western coalition.

Russia has once again outmaneuvered the West in relation to Syria, after a stroke of diplomatic genius from Moscow in 2013, which led to the Syrian government giving up their chemical weapons arsenal and averting a full-scale invasion by Western forces.

Obviously, the Western narrative that there are "moderate" terrorists fighting in Syria which we can trust and we should arm, is (and always has been), a total fallacy.

In reality, from the beginning, there were never any moderates in the Syrian conflict. The US complains as Russia bombs its protégées the Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood and AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq), which are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria, as evaluated by the Defense Intelligence Agency in their recently-declassified intelligence report from 2012.

Only one day after numerous countries—including the US—accused Russia of targeting civilians in Syria; Washington had to admit its forces had committed a war crime by bombing a hospital in Afghanistan, which was run by the NGO

Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)) and which resulted in the killing of 19 civilians (including at least three children), and wounded 37.

Hence, in the United States voices of great political weight in the superpower have begun to appear advising a different perspective on the new situation.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in an article published by the *Wall Street Journal* argues that the Russian anti-terrorist operation against the Islamic State in Syria has put an end to the political order in the Middle East which had been dominated by Washington for over 40 years. The White House should act more constructively and acknowledge that "the destruction of ISIS is more important than the overthrow of Bashar Assad."

"The U.S. has already acquiesced in a Russian military role. Painful as this is to the architects of the 1973 system, attention in the Middle East must remain focused on essentials, and the U.S. government must acknowledge the need to dialogue with other great powers," said the former U.S. State Secretary.

According to Kissinger, the U.S. must understand that "Russia's principal concern is that the Assad regime's collapse could reproduce the chaos of Libya, bring ISIS into power in Damascus, and turn all of Syria into a haven for terrorist operations, reaching into Muslim regions inside Russia's southern border in the Caucasus and elsewhere."

"But whatever their motivation, Russian forces are already in the region and their participation in combat operations is a challenge to US policy in the Middle East on a scale never seen at least over four decades," he said.

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*A CubaNews Translation
Edited by Walter Lippmann
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*Por Manuel Yepe**

“Estados Unidos está perdiendo con rapidez el mínimo respeto de que gozaba en todo el mundo su política internacional. La propaganda de Estados Unidos se está volviendo cada vez más infantil. Cualquier persona racional, mínimamente informada se asombra por el volumen de declaraciones ridículas,

Estado Islámico y a las demás fuerzas terroristas en Siria al bombardear sus almacenes de armamento, campos de entrenamiento, centros de comandos terroristas y otros objetivos claves.

Sobre todo, por comparación de sus resultados con los de la campaña de la coalición encabezada por Estados Unidos, los ataques aéreos rusos han desenmascarado la falacia de que Estado Islámico estaba siendo golpeado efectivamente y a poner

inteligencia de la DIA (Agencia de Inteligencia de la Defensa de Estados Unidos), recientemente desclasificado.

Un sólo día después que numerosos países, incluyendo a Estados Unidos, acusaran a Rusia de haber atacado a civiles en Siria, Washington debió reconocer que sus fuerzas habían cometido un crimen de guerra al bombardear un hospital en Afganistán que era operado por la ONG Médicos sin Fronteras, provocando 19 civiles (tres niños incluidos) muertos y 37 heridos.

De ahí que en los propios Estados Unidos han comenzado a aparecer voces de gran peso político en la superpotencia que están aconsejando una óptica diferente en la nueva situación.

El ex secretario de Estado de EEUU, Henry Kissinger, analiza en un artículo publicado en el “Wall Street Journal” que el operativo antiterrorista ruso dirigido contra el Estado Islámico en Siria “ha acabado con el orden político en la región de Medio Oriente liderado por Washington a lo largo de 40 años. La Casa Blanca debe actuar de manera más constructiva y reconocer que la destrucción del EI es más importante que derrocar al régimen de Bashar al Assad”.

“EEUU ya ha aceptado el papel militar de Rusia y, a pesar de lo triste que esto sea para los arquitectos del sistema en 1973, la atención actual en Medio Oriente debe permanecer centrada en lo esencial y el Gobierno norteamericano a reconocer la necesidad de dialogar con otras grandes potencias”, declaró el ex canciller de Estados Unidos.

Según Kissinger, EEUU debe acabar de entender, que “la principal preocupación de Moscú consiste en evitar que el colapso del régimen de Assad pueda reproducir el caos de Libia, imponer el poder del Estado Islámico en Damasco y convertir a toda Siria en un paraíso para terroristas, que posteriormente podría extenderse a las regiones musulmanas dentro de Rusia, en el Cáucaso y en otros lugares”. “Pero cualquiera que sea su motivación, las fuerzas rusas ya están en la región y su participación en las operaciones de combate constituye un desafío a la política norteamericana en Oriente Medio a una escala jamás vista al menos a lo largo de cuatro décadas”, aseveró.

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QUIÉN LUCHA Y QUIÉN AYUDA



engañosas, falaces y absurdas que constantemente emiten altos funcionarios de Washington”, según criterio del analista geopolítico Steven MacMillan, editor de la revista The Analyst Report, en un trabajo especial para la publicación digital “New Eastern Outlook” publicado el reciente 12 de octubre. Uno de los últimos y más grotescos episodios de este fenómeno fue cuando el presidente estadounidense, Barack Obama, intentó argumentar la falacia de que los ataques aéreos rusos contra el supuesto estado islámico en Siria solo están resultando en el fortalecimiento de esta organización terrorista.

Según el presidente estadounidense, la oposición moderada en Siria será una necesidad para que pueda haber una transición política, pero la política rusa está conduciendo a este sector de la ciudadanía a la clandestinidad, creándose una situación que fortalece al Estado Islámico.

Pero la realidad es que los ataques de Rusia han debilitado seriamente al

en duda las verdaderas intenciones de las acciones de los ataques de la coalición occidental liderada por Estados Unidos.

La genialidad diplomática de Rusia ya había superado a Occidente en las relaciones con Siria en 2013, cuando Moscú condujo al gobierno sirio a renunciar a su arsenal de armas químicas y así evitar una invasión en gran escala que preparaban las fuerzas occidentales.

Obviamente, la narrativa occidental de que hay terroristas “moderados” combatiendo en Siria en quienes se puede confiar y que se les debe armar, es una falacia total y siempre lo ha sido.

En realidad, nunca ha habido moderados en el conflicto sirio. Estados Unidos se lamenta de que Rusia bombardee a sus protegidos, que son los salafistas, la Hermandad Musulmana y el AQI (Al Qaeda en Irak) que coincidentemente son las principales fuerzas que conducen la insurgencia en Siria, según lo aseguraba en 2012 un informe de

Hey Justin!...

Our Demand Remains the Same:

 **Repeal Bill C-51!**

By Thomas Davies

Soldiers could be seen crossing the streets of Montreal on Halloween night in 1970, but the guns were real and they weren't in costume. The few kids who had been allowed go trick or treating had been pulled in by frightened parents well before sunset. Then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had invoked the War Measures Act in response to a rapidly growing Quebec independence movement, and two kidnappings by the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). Civil liberties were effectively suspended. Trudeau sent the military to secure the cities, and fear took over as he responded to questions of human rights and freedom under military rule by saying, "Yes, well there are a lot of bleeding hearts around who just don't like to see people with helmets and guns. All I can say is, go on and bleed..."

Fast forward 45 years to Halloween 2015, and there is a different Trudeau recently elected as Prime Minister of Canada. Pierre's son Justin will now preside over a government which has recently passed the controversial and widely detested "anti-terrorism" law called Bill C-51. His Liberal Party has a majority in Parliament, and are promising some weak amendments to the Bill which is responsible for blowing the door wide open to widespread human rights abuses and silencing of dissenting voices.

It's important to point out the obvious: A human rights violation is a human rights violation, and a bad law is a bad law, no matter what kind of make-up, mask or

costume you try and hide it with. Now is more important than ever not be tricked into supporting something so many of us rightly denounced and organized against. We need to continue to demand an immediate repeal of Bill C-51, and if the Liberals are sincere in bringing "Real Change" to Canada, this will be the very first thing they do after forming government.

They Voted For It!

Many are understandably happy to see former Prime Minister Stephen Harper lose an election after 9 years of

more coordinated information sharing by government departments and agencies."

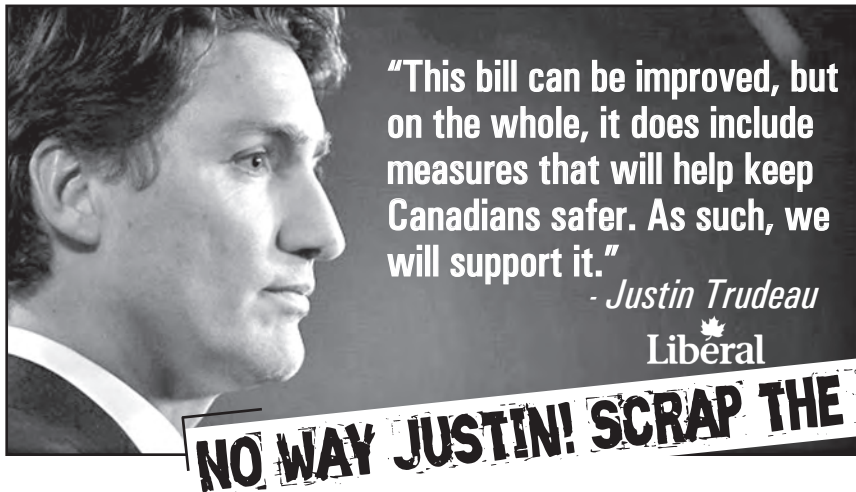
So they like the spying, the privacy violating and the incarcerating parts of Bill C-51, but the other stuff just needs to be "improved"?

So What's with the Amendments?

As this article is being written, Justin Trudeau has not yet been sworn into office. There is speculation regarding the amendments the Liberals promised after voting for Bill C-51, but the two Liberal Party issues of concern Trudeau highlighted are "the question of oversight; and second, the need for regular reviews of our national security laws."

The centrepiece of the Liberals amendments has been said to be the creation an all party national security committee that would have access to information related to activities authorized by

Bill C-51. As Trudeau correctly pointed out, "Of the 'Five Eyes' group of allies – including the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand – Canada is the only country without national security oversight by its representatives and legislators." Who are we really fooling here though? These "oversight" committees haven't stopped the governments in any of the countries he references from carrying out huge human rights abuses at home and broad in the name of "anti-terrorism". They are also promising a review of all anti-terrorism laws after 3 years, and to seek consultation from experts and the public *after* they have introduced the amendments. Why wait 3 years to review



implementing a basically anti-human and neoliberal agenda of domestic cutbacks and foreign military interventions. However, we cannot forget that the Liberal Party voted for and supported many of these actions. Especially on the crucial issue of Bill C-51, Justin Trudeau and every single Liberal Party member of parliament who voted, voted in favour. Mr. Trudeau came right out and said, "This bill can be improved, but on the whole, it does include measures that will help keep Canadians safer. As such, we will support it." He followed that up with, "Liberals welcome the measures that build on powers of preventative arrest, make better use of no-fly lists, and allow for

the laws? Why not consult the public before you introduce your amendments?

The Fundamentals Remain the Same

The most important thing to remember is that there was never really any case made for why Bill C-51 needed to exist in the first place, or how it actually makes anyone in Canada safer. There was just a lot of overblown rhetoric from Stephen Harper that, “Our Government understands that extreme jihadists have declared war on us, on all free people, and on Canada specifically.” This despite that fact that just three people have died in Canada from domestic terrorist attacks in the last 20 years. As the right-wing National Post newspaper pointed out, “Ultimately, however, the legislation [Bill C-51] raises more questions than it answers — the most basic being, ‘Why?’”

Leave aside the fact that Bill C-51 should never have existed in the first place, from what we’ve been able to see of the proposed amendments, many of the worst parts of Bill C-51 would remain:

- Giving Canada’s spy agency CSIS the undefined powers of “disruption”.

- The parts of Bill C-51 that effectively allow government spy agencies to collect and store our private information in giant centralized databases, without even needing

that undermine the security of Canada” which are completely open to being abused to target dissenting voices.

Ultimately the Liberals are doing the same thing that the Conservatives did – reinforcing the existence of a bad law which is justified by an irrational fear campaign. There will still be no meaningful public consultation or education. Over 300,000 people have signed the online petition demanding the government Repeal Bill C-51. This is one of the largest-ever political campaigns in the history of Canada, but the Canadian government is trying to pretend it doesn’t exist.

Who is the Liberal Party?

While a new young leader and a slick campaign anchored by the slogan of, “Real Change” may have led many to believe that they were voting for a progressive political party when voting for the Liberals, it’s just not true.

It was under the Liberal Party that Canada plunged head first into the new era of war and occupation, by becoming



Passers-by stop to sign the petition to repeal bill C-51 at Waterfront Skytrain Station, October 26, 2015

and over 18 billion dollars between 2001 and 2012.

Also, despite claiming publicly otherwise, under the Liberals Canada was an active participant in the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Canada’s contribution to the American war effort in Iraq— three ships and 100 exchange officers— was only exceeded by the United States, Britain and Australia. US Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci mused at the time, “Ironically, the Canadians indirectly provide more support for us in Iraq than most of those 46 countries that are fully supporting us. It’s kind of an odd situation.”

The Liberal Party coupled its war abroad with an increase of the war at home. Islamophobia didn’t start with the Conservatives. It was the Liberal government who began to escalate use of “Security Certificates” to jail young Muslim men indefinitely, using secret evidence the accused did not even have a right to see!

It was also the Liberal Party which were the original promoters of austerity politics and cutbacks in Canada. As a recent New Yorker Magazine article pointed out, “Two of Trudeau’s predecessors as Liberal leader, Jean Chrétien, who was Prime Minister from 1993 to 2003, and Paul Martin, Chrétien’s finance minister and then Prime Minister from 2003 to 2006, championed the politics and economics of austerity in Canada.” Under both Chrétien and Martin the government cut spending on welfare programs, announced major cuts to the public service, raised payroll taxes, and



The weekly pickets to repeal Bill C-51 have continued for 34 straight weeks! Oct 13, 2015.

a warrant. This has already been specifically denounced by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

- Vague language and undefined new legal concepts such as “activities

an active participant in the disastrous invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in 2001. 14 years later and every major quality of life indicator in Afghanistan has plummeted, while the occupation cost the lives of 158 Canadian soldiers

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LONG LIVE THE 3RD INTIFADA!

Palestinian Struggle Against Zionist Israel Continues...



By Noah Fine

As a precursor to the following article, it is important to state that this is not in any way an attempt at a simply journalistic or so-called 'un-biased' approach to the Palestine/Israel conflict. As a Jewish activist against Zionism and a ten years social justice organizer, I must say that in fact this is a very biased article in favor of the oppressed side of the conflict.

On Monday November 2nd, 2015 the government of Israel passed into law a minimum 3-year prison sentence for Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem who throw stones at the police and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). The law also states that Palestinian stone-throwers along with their families will be stripped of their state-benefits. The day before on November 1st, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to cancel Jerusalem residency for up to 100,000 Palestinians living in the city. This outright threatening of ethnic cleansing is a scare tactic by Netanyahu to tell Palestinians they will become refugees on their own land like so many Palestinians before them if they revolt to injustice. But did this really work?

Where does this threatening of crackdown come from and why is it being used to collectively punish all Palestinians living in East Jerusalem? Why a campaign to strike fear into the Palestinian people? Because the crisis of Israel's occupation of Palestine has reached to a boiling point and Palestinian heroic resistance has reached to point of no return. So much

so, that Palestinian citizens of Israel, who this new law affects them too are also joining the resistance en mass. Resistance to Israeli occupation, discrimination, suppression, exploitation and humiliation has spread through all areas where Palestinian people live. Indeed 67 years of intimidation, expulsion, killings and imprisonment of Palestinian did not work. In Gaza, the West Bank, the refugee camps and all over Israeli occupied territories people are in motion for self-determination. This phenomenon taking place as far wide as it is, is being called on both sides of the conflict, one side with fear, the other side with hope: The Third Intifada!

The 3rd Intifada

Since the beginning of October a wave of resistance has grown among the Palestinian population and specially youth in all areas struggling against Israel's occupation, as well as police and army excessive brutality. There is no shortage of news headlines in the West

claiming acts of terrorism, stabbings by Palestinian radicals against Israeli settlers and military personnel. However a glimpse into the Palestinian reality, which major media easily neglects, can give a more sober and honest projection of the events taking place.

The media will tell a short story of Israeli government tightening and limiting access of Palestinians to Al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem, one of the holiest sites for people of the Muslim faith. The media tells us that anger over the restrictions of Palestinians to enter the holy site have led to these radicalized stabbings by Palestinians against Israelis. However the media does not paint the full picture, not even a sketch. The seizing of Al Aqsa mosque by Israel is simply another insult in the face of the Palestinian people who already suffer under the most disturbing conditions known to humanity. A quick look at the hard statistics can give a good idea of the reality on the ground. Since the beginning of October, Israeli forces as well as Israeli settlers have killed at least

73 Palestinians. That number includes women, children and peaceful protesters. In the same amount of time nine Israelis have been killed. Since the beginning of October, 1,600 Palestinians, the majority of which are youths have been imprisoned by Israel.

No-Go...tations

The current conflict has led to the usual clamor of international institutions and governments with their ever applicable, always faithful solution: Negotiations! The idea is to bring the two sides together to come to a



peaceful resolution. The problem is that historically Israel has demonstrated time and time again that they are not a negotiating party but a war party. Every major confrontation between Palestinian people and the State of Israel has come to negotiations on the grounds of the "Two-State Solution". However, as if it even was ever in the Zionists interests to pursue such an agreement. Their talks and actions every time negotiations have been contrary. During the talks on the Oslo Accord in March 2014 negotiating the terms of a two-state solution, Israel continued expanding it's territory throughout the West Bank making an impossible solution ever more impossible. And that is just one example. Throughout all years of negotiations Israel has waved the carrot while it simultaneously uses the stick against the Palestinian people. And the Zionist leaders including Netanyahu have not been quiet about it either. Leading up to March 2015 Israeli elections Netanyahu stated clearly "I think that anyone who is going to establish a Palestinian state today and evacuate lands, is giving attack grounds to the radical Islam against the state of Israel". When reporters asked him if that statement meant that if elected he would not pursue a two-state solution, Netanyahu confirmed that was, "correct". The Israeli ruling class' lack of interest and seriousness for any peace negotiation or two state solution is also very apparent with the creation and continuation of the apartheid separation wall around Palestinians to separate the well kept and modern life of Israeli settlers from the poor and dire conditions of Palestinian farmers, town and villages.

How could there be any peace negotiations and two state solutions when the Apartheid Wall already divided Palestinians into the separate enclaves?

Insult to Injury

On October 20th, Prime Minister Netanyahu in a move that would have been surprising if not coming from the mouth of the very person leading the criminal assault on Palestinian people, in his speech ingeniously entitled "the 10 big lies" to the World Zionist Congress, made the following statement: "Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time, he wanted to expel the Jews. And Haj Amin al-Husseini (Palestinian Mufti of Jerusalem) went to Hitler and said, 'If you expel them, they'll all come here.' 'So what should I do with them?' he asked. He said, 'Burn them.'" What does that mean in plain terms? That Palestinians NOT Hitler are responsible for the Holocaust. Later on Facebook Netanyahu apologized for his outright fabrication of history after Zionist opposition parties, governments worldwide, including a spokesperson for German Chancellor Angela Merkel and dozens of Holocaust survivors protested his comments.



Unimaginable death & destruction in Gaza after Israeli assault, 2014.

Canada and Israel – Harper and Trudeau

Despite the brutality of Israel's assault on Palestinian people and despite Israel's ignorance of any negotiations for peace, the government of Canada historically and especially under the leadership of former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper have been strong. It's good for people living in Canada to know that the newly elected Liberal candidate Justin Trudeau has no plans on changing that relationship. Both Rafael Barak, Israeli Ambassador to Canada and Trudeau's spokesperson, Kate Purchase commented on the very positive telephone call recently made between Trudeau and Netanyahu. Barak commented after the call "I'm sure maybe the style will change... But I don't feel there will be a change on the substance. I'm really reassured."

Zionist Occupation Is the Problem

Alongside the Palestinian resistance, a growing movement of Jewish people living in Israel have also joined the ranks of opposition to the government of Israel. Especially since the time of the Arab Spring and Occupy Movements, Jewish people have gone to the streets in hundreds of thousands demanding social justice for their own rights as well as Palestinians. This occurrence is not surprising considering the "GINI Index" which measures inequality in countries rated Israel as second most unequal country in the world following the United States.

The Israeli victims of stabbings by



Thousands of Palestinians protest as at least 2,617 Palestinians have been shot and injured by Israeli forces using live and rubber bullets in the month of October, 2015.

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The Reestablishment of U.S.-Cuba Diplomatic Relations



By Tamara Hansen

On Thursday, September 17, 2015 Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) organized a public community forum & discussion titled, "Reestablishing U.S./Cuba Relations & the Necessity of Lifting the U.S. Blockade on Cuba". This forum was held exactly 9 months after the December 17, 2014 announcement by US president Barack Obama and Cuban president Raul Castro that the US and Cuba would be reestablishing diplomatic ties after 54 years of broken relations. The community forum also took place during an international period of action where groups across Canada, the US and around the world were campaigning to bring an end to the continued U.S. blockade against Cuba, September 15-19, 2015.

Last month Fire This Time Newspaper (Volume 9 Issue 10) published excerpts from the talk of Nino Pagliccia, a long time Cuba solidarity activist in Canada and editor of the new book "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: 5 Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations" (Friesen Press, 2014).

This month Fire This Time is publishing excerpts from the second speaker at the forum, Tamara Hansen, the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and author of the book "5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010).

Excerpts from the talk by Tamara Hansen

I think Nino's talk gave a really good context for tonight. I know from inviting many people to the event tonight that I had a lot

of people asking me, 'why are you having International Days of Action against the U.S. blockade, isn't that over?' There is a really common misconception, not only in the general public, but even in the Cuba solidarity movement, that the blockade is officially over.

Nino built the case quite well that, no, while certain aspects of the blockade are being eased, such as the travel ban and other aspects of trade – we know that Obama has not taken all the steps he can, within his power, to ease the blockade on Cuba. Not only that, we also know that most of the blockade is not in Obama's hands, most of it is in the hands of the U.S. congress which means there is still a huge amount of work to be done to convince the U.S. government and U.S. ruling class that it is in their interest to end this policy, which Cuba calls a genocidal policy against their country. [...]

The question I want to look at tonight, is that if we agree that the U.S. government has basically been at war with Cuba for the last 54 years (whether we think it is a cold war or a so-called "hot" war, is not really the biggest issue) the issue is why are they changing their policy now? and how much are they changing their policy now? [...]

I think that it is always useful to read the words of the White House, to understand what they are thinking about. A lot of times we think about U.S. politicians as liars and not very honest, but sometimes when you actually read the quotes that they make and you look at them carefully there are some

Why is the US Changing its policy now?

grains of very interesting truth.

So this is from the White House website and their explanation of their new Cuba policy: "Decades of US isolation of Cuba have failed to accomplish our objective of empowering Cubans to build an open and democratic country. At times, longstanding US policy towards Cuba has isolated the United States from regional and international partners, constrained our ability to influence outcomes throughout the Western Hemisphere, and impaired the use of the full range of tools available to the United States to promote positive change in Cuba. Though this policy has been rooted in the best of intentions, it has had little effect – today, as in 1961, Cuba is governed by the Castros and the Communist party." So here cloaked in some language like 'positive change' and 'best intentions' we see that the U.S. government itself admits that its policy towards Cuba over the last 54 years has not led to Cuba's isolation, in fact it has led to the isolation of the United States itself. Plus, it admits that it has "constrained [the United States] ability to influence outcomes throughout the Western Hemisphere".

So when we look at this we really start to understand that the United States government is being conveniently honest here. That really rather than their policy of blocking impacting the people of Cuba, impacting their morale, impacting their determination to support their revolution, instead it has had the reverse effect in isolating the U.S. government. As 54 years have gone by, the U.S. government has sure taken its time to learn this lesson and this is partly why the situation is changing today and why the U.S. has decided to chart a new course.

But it is not just because the U.S. is waking up this morning and realizing that Cuba is not isolated, and that Cuba is in fact being embraced by the world. It is also the fact that the U.S. is in a very different situation than it was in 1961. By 1961 every single government in the Western hemisphere, with the exception of Mexico and Canada, had cut diplomatic ties with Cuba. The U.S. had so much control over the governments of the

Caribbean and Latin America that they were able to convince those governments to cut ties with Cuba. But through hard work and perseverance, including sending Cuban doctors and educators throughout Latin America, Cuba has now renewed diplomatic ties with every country in the Americas, including now the United States. And, Cuba is not only recognized in the Western hemisphere- Cuba has diplomatic or consular relations with 187 Countries and States around the world. [...]

In a lot of ways I think that fighting against the U.S. blockade can be a very fascinating issue. It is something that we can bring a

lot of attention to, the way that for example Pastors for Peace has done by really confronting the blockade in a very head on way in the United States. In many ways, I think we are lucky because while working on the campaign to free the Cuban 5 we were talking to the public here in Vancouver who had never heard of the Cuban 5 before, and it required a lot of education and discussion to convince people that this was something they should care about. I feel like our campaign to end the blockade and to end the U.S. occupation of Guantanamo are two issues that people living in Vancouver and across Canada

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VICTORY FOR CUBA! UN Overwhelmingly Votes Against the Blockade!

Post-Talk Speaker's Notes

By Tamara Hansen

Since the forum on September 17, 2015, there has been an important update in the campaign to end the U.S. blockade on Cuba. On Tuesday October 27, 2015 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted for the 23rd year in a row on a resolution put forward by Cuba about ending the U.S. blockade.

At the end of the talk by Nino Pagliccia printed in Volume 9 Issue 10 of *Fire This Time Newspaper*, he said, "Now given all of this, and given that this is now as a resolution that in fact will be presented at the UN and will be voted on at the UN on the 27th of October. How is the U.S. going to vote? [...] I don't have the answer. It's quite a dilemma for them to decide now which way to go. And I think that is when we will probably get a good hint of their good intentions or their real intentions."

Surprisingly to me, in the days after the forum there were articles in mainstream news saying the U.S. government might abstain from the U.N. vote.

> Associated Press: "APNewsBreak: US weighs abstention on Cuba embargo vote at UN"

> USAToday: "GOP furious that U.S. may abstain on U.N. vote to condemn Cuba embargo"

> FoxNews: "US reportedly may abstain from UN vote condemning Cuba embargo"

The AP article cited "four [U.S.] administration officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly" and showed that the White House was obviously trying to raise some eyebrows. Despite all of this it seemed impossible that the U.S. would abstain on the U.N. vote because we know that the U.S. intentions towards Cuba are not friendly.

So, on October 27, 2015, while 191 countries worldwide voted in the United Nations General Assembly to end the U.S. blockade on Cuba, only the United States and Israel voted once again on the wrong side of history voting to keep the unjust and cruel blockade on Cuba.

How did the U.S. justify its vote? In their, "Explanation of Vote at a UN General Assembly Meeting on the Cuba Embargo" the U.S. mission to the U.N. stated, "We regret [...] that the Government of Cuba has chosen to proceed with its annual resolution. The text falls short of reflecting the significant steps that have been taken and the spirit of engagement President Obama has championed. As a result, the United States cannot support it."

However, they ignore that Cuba's resolution was virtually the same as it has been, because

despite gains in other areas in U.S.-Cuba relations, the blockade remains mostly unchanged. Cuba's arguments against the blockade were powerfully outlined in the talk by Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, given at the UNGA before the vote. His talk is reprinted in this issue of *Fire This Time Newspaper*.

In the end, the October 2015 vote at the UNGA was a triumphant victory for socialist Cuba. Out of 193 nations at the UN, 191 or 99% of countries voted together with Cuba to end the cruel and unjust U.S. Blockade. However, our work is not over. We need to continue building the worldwide campaign against the blockade, to be a part of ending this historic injustice against the people of Cuba.

If you are in Vancouver, Canada please join us for the next monthly picket action of the Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade (FCAB-Vancouver) on Tuesday November 17, 2015 at 4pm in front of the United States Consulate (1075 W. Pender St. in Downtown Vancouver)

AHORA MAS QUE NUNCA ¡ABAJO EL BLOQUEO CRIMINAL!

NOW MORE THAN EVER, LIFT THE CRIMINAL BLOCKADE!

Bruno Rodríguez: “We will continue to present this draft resolution for as long as the blockade persists”

**SPEECH BY THE CUBAN FOREIGN
MINISTER BRUNO RODRIGUEZ AT
THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTE
AGAINST THE BLOCKADE.
OCTOBER 27, 2015**

Mr. President;

Distinguished Permanent Representatives;

Esteemed Delegates;

On December 17 last year, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, recognized that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba had failed, is obsolete, has not met the originally envisaged goals and causes damages to the Cuban people and isolation to the US Government.

Ever since then, the US President has been reiterating that the blockade should be lifted. He has urged the Congress of his country to do so instead of standing in the way of the US citizens who openly support its termination. He has committed to engage in a debate with that purpose and use his executive prerogatives to modify its implementation.

During the recently held 2030 Development Agenda Summit and at the United Nations General Debate, more than sixty Heads of States, Governments and Delegations welcomed and expressed their best wishes over the announcement of the new course taken by the US-Cuba relations, including the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the re-opening of embassies, and

many of them demanded that the blockade is finally abolished.

Therefore, the interest and expectations raised by these deliberations and the subsequent vote, which takes place under new circumstances, are only understandable.

In the face of an almost unanimous claim by the international community -symbolized by the vote in favor of 188 member States and Cuba's participation in the Summit of the Americas held in Panama-, and the claim of the large majority of the US society and the Cuban emigration settled here, the US government has announced a new policy towards our country.

But the measures adopted by the US Administration, which came into force on January 16 this year and were later on expanded on

September 18, although positive, only modify, in a very limited way, some elements related to the implementation of the blockade.

Many of them could not be implemented unless others are adopted that would finally allow Cuba to freely export and import products and services to and from the United States; use American dollars in its international financial transactions and operate accounts in that currency in third countries banks and have access to credits and financing from private entities and international financial institutions.

The problem is not that the Cuban order hampers the implementation of these measures and therefore it needs to be modified in order to facilitate this process, as has been stated by some US officials. The problem is the implacable and systematic existence of the blockade.

We should not mix up reality with wishful thinking or good-will expressions. In these circumstances, one can only judge by facts.

And facts show, crystal-clear, that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba is being fully and completely implemented.

Ten months after the announcements made on December 17, no tangible, substantial modification has been introduced in the implementation of the blockade.

Cuba's removal from the spurious list of States Sponsors of International Terrorism was the inevitable rectification of a nonsense, but this has hardly had any impact on the implementation of the blockade, which is supported by a far more comprehensive system of previously established sanctions and laws.

Barely a week ago, a 1.116 billion dollar fine was imposed on the French bank Credit Agricole, which adds up to the 1.710 billion dollar fine imposed on the German bank Commerzbank in March this year for doing transactions with Cuba

and other States.

Only in recent weeks, the secure messaging system SWIFT cancelled a service contract; the first payment of the American company Sprint to initiate direct telephone calls as well as several other banking transfers for the operations of charter flights were withheld.

The exiguous Cuban food purchases in the United States, one of the few exceptions to the blockade, which were approved in the year 2000 by the US Congress, significantly diminished last year because they are subject to discriminatory and onerous conditions: each purchase must be authorized by a license; the granting of credits is not allowed; Cuba is forced to pay in cash and in advance through banking entities of third countries and is not allowed to use its own vessels to transport those products.

The imports of the medicines and the medical equipment that our country needs are also conditioned, since 1992, by the US law. Cuba is required to report on the final recipient of the medicines it acquires and is not allowed to make direct payments, but only through third parties and in a currency other than the US dollar, which entails additional difficulties, delays and costs.

Several other examples could be mentioned, such as the case of the company Elekta, which confirmed, on last September 2, that it will not be able to supply to the National Institute of Oncology and Radiobiology or any other hospital in Cuba the radioactive isotope Iridium-192, which ensures the normal functioning of the brachytherapy equipment that are indispensable to offer higher quality and accuracy cancer therapies, because its purveyor, the US company Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals, refused to sell it to Cuba.

The US company Small Bone Innovation Inc. has refused to supply wrists and hands joints prostheses to the “Frank País” Orthopedic Complex which are intended for patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis.

In June last year, the US company SIGMA Aldrich refused to supply to the company Quimimpex the products, services and technical information which are indispensable to the chemical industry; and the US firm Columbiana Boiler Company informed the aforementioned company that it was not allowed to export the cylinders necessary to transport the chlorine destined to the treatment of water.

The blockade is a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans; it is contrary to International Law; it has been described as a crime of genocide by the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 and is the main obstacle to the economic and social development of our people.

The human damages it has caused are inestimable. Seventy seven per cent of all Cubans have been suffering the blockade since the day they were born. The shortages and deprivations that it causes to all Cuban families can not be accounted for.

According to rigorous and conservative calculations, the economic damages it has caused after more than half a century amount to 833.755 billion dollars, based on the price of gold. At current prices, it amounts to 121.192 billion dollars, a figure of enormous proportions for a small economy like ours.

I hope that the US Representative will not come here now to tell us that the draft resolution does not accurately reflect the spirit of dialogue or the kind attitude of the US government; nor take on a hackneyed stand saying that the United States is the benefactor partner of the Cuban people that is only looking for its empowerment; or inflates the figure of 900 000 dollar donations by the civil society received in 2015, which are hampered by the blockade and appreciated by our people; or refer to the family remittances that are saved with great effort by the Cubans living here as if they were government funds; or consider as a commercial exchange the export licenses that are granted but are not materialized.

While it is up to the US Congress to adopt the decision to put an end to the blockade, the President has broad executive prerogatives to substantially modify its practical implementation and its humanitarian and economic impact.

We share the hope that the Congress of the United States will move on to change an inefficient, cruel and unjust policy, anchored in the past, and adopt decisions based on the values and feelings of its citizens.

Mr. President:

Historically, the United States has intended to establish its domination and hegemony on our homeland and, since 1959, it has tried to change the political, economic and social system that our people, fully exercising the right to self-determination, has freely chosen.

Some spokespersons from the US Government have declared that the announced Cuba policy is about a change of methods, not goals.

Should this be the case, the process towards the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba will face very serious obstacles.

The lifting of the blockade will be the essential element that will give some meaning to the progress achieved in the last few months in the relations between both countries and shall set the pace towards normalization.

As has been recognized by President Barack Obama, the lifting of the blockade serves the US national interest and is the will its citizens.

Any attempt to condition the lifting or modification of the blockade to the introduction of internal changes in Cuba will be in no way acceptable nor productive.

Cuba is ready to accept the opportunities and face the challenges of a new era in the relations between both countries, but it will never negotiate its socialist system or its internal affairs, nor will it allow any blemish on its independence, which was

conquered at the price of the blood of its best sons and daughters and after the huge sacrifices made by many generations since the beginning of our independence wars in 1868.

As has been reiterated by President Raúl Castro Ruz, both governments must find the way to coexist in a civilized manner, despite their profound differences, and advance as much as possible for the benefit of the peoples of the United States and Cuba, through a dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect and sovereign equality.

There is no enmity between the peoples of the United States and Cuba. The Cuban people expressed its solidarity at the time of the terrible terrorist actions of September 11, 2001, or the devastating impact of hurricane Katrina.

We appreciate and recognize the progress achieved recently with the re-opening of embassies, the visits paid by the Secretaries of State and Commerce and the exchange of delegations; the functioning of a Steering Committee; the expansion of the areas of dialogue and cooperation, particularly in the field of air and aviation safety; the combat of drug-trafficking, illegal migration and traffic in persons;



law enforcement, environmental protection and health, among others.

We are really interested in developing fruitful relations; offering our hospitality to the US citizens who enjoy the freedom of traveling to Cuba; expanding enriching, cultural, sports, scientific and academic exchanges; promoting a multifaceted cooperation in areas of common interest, trade and investments.

We have initiated a human rights dialogue with a strict reciprocal character and despite our huge differences.

For all that we have been guided by the principles contained in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in January of 2014 in Havana, as well as the principles and purposes enshrined in the UN Charter.

This could also be a modest contribution to the quest for a new way in which human beings and nations can relate to one another in this era marked by global crisis, the inevitable impact of climate change, the non-conventional wars that unleash

atrocious conflicts, new forms of terrorism, the existence of huge nuclear arsenals, extraordinary arms spending and the risk of pandemics.

As was stated fifteen years ago in this very hall by Fidel Castro Ruz, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, "Humanity should be aware of what we have been so far and what we can not continue to be. Presently, our species have enough accumulated knowledge, ethical values and scientific resources to move towards a new historical era of true justice and humanism. There is nothing in the existing economic and political order that can serve the interests of Humankind. Thus, it is unsustainable and it must be changed."

Mr. President:

Twenty three years after this resolution was first adopted, we have achieved a remarkable progress in 2015.

It has been a reward for the indefatigable resistance, selfless efforts, the firm convictions of our people and the leadership of the historical generation of the Revolution headed by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro and President Raúl Castro.

We are deeply grateful to all the governments and peoples, parliaments, political forces and social movements, representatives of the civil society, international and regional organizations that, particularly in this United Nations General Assembly, have contributed their voice and vote, year after year, to support the fairness and urgency of the elimination of the blockade.

We have made it all the way here thanks also to the majority and ever-growing support given by the US people to this lofty purpose, to whom we also convey our gratitude.

We know that the way ahead is long and difficult. We will continue to present this draft resolution for as long as the blockade persists in this General Assembly.

The Cuban people will never renounce its sovereignty or the path that it has freely chosen to build a more just, efficient, prosperous and sustainable socialism. Neither will it give up in its quest for a more equitable and democratic international order.

Mr. President:

Distinguished Permanent Representatives:

Esteemed delegates:

We have presented a new draft resolution that reflects the reality of the rigorous and oppressive implementation of the blockade against Cuba and also welcomes and recognizes, in the new preambular paragraphs, the progress achieved in the course of last year.

On behalf of the heroic, self-sacrificing and fraternal people of Cuba, I ask you to vote in favor of the draft resolution contained in document A/70/L.2. "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba."

Thank you, very much.

Bruno Rodríguez: "Mientras el bloqueo persista, seguiremos presentando el proyecto de resolución."

*DISCURSO DEL MINISTRO DE
RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE CUBA,
BRUNO RODRÍGUEZ EN LA ASAMBLEA
GENERAL DE LA ONU.
27 DE OCTUBRE DE 2015.*

Señor Presidente:

Distinguidos Representantes Permanentes:

Estimados Delegados:

El 17 de diciembre pasado, el Presidente de los Estados Unidos Barack Obama reconoció que el bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto a Cuba ha fracasado, es obsoleto, no ha cumplido los objetivos que se previeron, y provoca daños al pueblo cubano y aislamiento al gobierno norteamericano.

Desde entonces, el Presidente ha reiterado que el bloqueo debe ser levantado. Ha pedido al Congreso de su país proceder así en vez de actuar contra la voluntad de los ciudadanos estadounidenses que apoyan claramente su terminación. Se ha comprometido a involucrarse en el debate con ese fin y a utilizar sus prerrogativas ejecutivas para modificar su aplicación.

Durante la Cumbre sobre la Agenda de Desarrollo 2030 y en el Debate General recientes, más de 60 Jefes de Estado, de Gobierno y de Delegaciones expresaron beneplácito y congratulación ante el anuncio del nuevo curso en las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba, incluido el restablecimiento de relaciones diplomáticas y embajadas, y muchos de ellos reclamaron que el bloqueo sea finalmente abolido.

Es comprensible entonces el interés y expectativas que concitan estas deliberaciones y la subsiguiente votación que transcurren en circunstancias nuevas.

Ante el reclamo casi unánime de la comunidad internacional, simbolizado en el voto de 188 Estados miembros y en la participación de Cuba en la Cumbre de las Américas de Panamá; y de la clara mayoría de la sociedad estadounidense y

la emigración cubana aquí asentada, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha anunciado una nueva política hacia nuestro país.

Pero, las medidas adoptadas por el ejecutivo norteamericano que entraron en vigor el pasado 16 de enero y luego fueron ampliadas el 18 de septiembre, aunque positivas, solo modifican de forma muy limitada algunos elementos de la aplicación del bloqueo.

Muchas de ellas no podrán implementarse a menos que se adopten otras que finalmente permitan a Cuba exportar e importar libremente productos y servicios hacia o desde Estados Unidos; utilizar el dólar estadounidense en sus transacciones financieras internacionales y operar cuentas en esa moneda en bancos de terceros países; así como tener acceso a créditos y financiamientos de entidades privadas y de las instituciones financieras internacionales.

El problema no es que el ordenamiento cubano dificulte la aplicación de estas medidas y tenga que ser modificado para facilitarlo, como algunos funcionarios estadounidenses han declarado. El problema es la existencia implacable y sistémica del bloqueo.

No debemos confundir la realidad con los deseos ni las expresiones de buena voluntad. En asuntos como estos, solo puede juzgarse a partir de los hechos.

Y los hechos demuestran, con toda claridad, que el bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto contra Cuba está en plena y completa aplicación.

Diez meses después de los anuncios del 17 de diciembre, no se ha producido ninguna modificación tangible, sustancial, en la práctica del bloqueo.

La eliminación de Cuba de la espuria lista de Estados patrocinadores del terrorismo internacional fue la inevitable rectificación de un absurdo, pero apenas ha tenido consecuencias en la implementación del bloqueo, sustentado en sanciones y leyes previas mucho más abarcadoras.

Hace apenas una semana, se aplicó una multa de 1 116 millones de dólares al banco francés Credit Agricole que se suma a la de \$1 710 millones al alemán Commerzbank el pasado mes de marzo, por realizar transacciones con Cuba y otros Estados.

Solo en las últimas semanas, el sistema de mensajería segura SWIFT canceló un contrato de servicios, fue retenido el primer pago de la compañía Sprint para iniciar las llamadas telefónicas directas, y se retuvieron varias transferencias bancarias a Cuba por la operación de vuelos chárter.

Las exiguas compras cubanas de alimentos en los Estados Unidos, que es una de las pocas excepciones al bloqueo, aprobadas en el año 2000 por el Congreso, han disminuido significativamente en el último año, debido a que están sujetas a condiciones discriminatorias y onerosas: cada compra tiene que ser autorizada

*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

por una licencia, se prohíben los créditos, Cuba está obligada a pagar en efectivo y por adelantado, a través de entidades bancarias de terceros países, y no puede utilizar barcos propios para transportar estos productos.

Algo similar ocurre con las importaciones de medicamentos necesarios para el país, también condicionadas desde 1992 por la ley de los Estados Unidos. Cuba debe dar cuenta sobre el destinatario final de las medicinas adquiridas y no puede hacer los pagos directamente, sino a través de terceros y en una moneda distinta al dólar, lo cual implica dificultades, demoras y costos adicionales.

Podrían mencionarse numerosos ejemplos, como el de la compañía Elekta que confirmó el pasado 2 de septiembre que no podrá suministrar al Instituto Nacional de Oncología y Radiobiología ni a otros hospitales el isótopo radioactivo Iridio-192 que garantiza el normal funcionamiento de los equipos de braquiterapia, imprescindibles para impartir tratamientos de mayor calidad y precisión contra el cáncer, dado que su suministrador, la compañía estadounidense Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals, se negó a venderlo con destino a Cuba.

La compañía norteamericana Small Bone Innovation, Inc. ha rehusado suministrar al Complejo Ortopédico "Frank País" prótesis para las articulaciones de la muñeca y mano para pacientes con artritis reumatoide.

En junio pasado, la compañía estadounidense SIGMA Aldrich se negó a proporcionar a la compañía Quimimpex productos, servicios e información técnica indispensables para la industria química; y la empresa norteamericana Columbiana Boiler Company dijo a la citada empresa estar impedida de exportar los cilindros necesarios para envasar el cloro destinado a la potabilización del agua.

El bloqueo constituye una violación flagrante, masiva y sistemática de los derechos humanos de todos los cubanos, es contrario al Derecho Internacional, califica como acto de genocidio a tenor de la Convención para la Prevención y Sanción del Delito de Genocidio de 1948 y es el principal obstáculo para el desarrollo económico y social de nuestro pueblo.

Los daños humanos que ha producido son incalculables. El 77% de los cubanos lo han sufrido desde su nacimiento. Las carencias y privaciones que provoca a todas las familias cubanas no pueden contabilizarse.

Calculados conservadora y rigurosamente, los daños económicos que ha ocasionado, en más de medio siglo, ascienden a 833 755 millones de dólares, según el valor del oro. A precios corrientes, suman 121 192 millones de dólares, cifra de enorme magnitud para una economía pequeña como la nuestra.

Espero que el Representante de los Estados Unidos no venga ahora a decirnos que el proyecto

de resolución no refleja completamente el espíritu de diálogo ni la actitud bondadosa de su gobierno; ni asuma la manida pose de que Estados Unidos es el socio benefactor del pueblo cubano que únicamente pretende su empoderamiento; ni infle la cifra de 900 mil dólares de donaciones de la sociedad civil recibidas en 2015 que el bloqueo dificulta y nuestro pueblo aprecia; ni mencione como si fueran fondos gubernamentales, las remesas familiares que los cubanos aquí asentados ahorran con esfuerzo; ni cuente como intercambio comercial, las licencias otorgadas pero que no se materializan en exportaciones.

Si bien corresponde al Congreso de los Estados Unidos la decisión de ponerle fin al bloqueo, el Presidente tiene amplias prerrogativas ejecutivas para modificar sustancialmente su aplicación práctica y su impacto humanitario y económico.

Compartimos la esperanza de que el Congreso de los Estados Unidos avance hacia el cambio de una política ineficaz, anclada en el pasado, cruel e injusta, y adopte decisiones basadas en los valores y sentimientos de sus ciudadanas y ciudadanos.

Señor Presidente:

Históricamente, Estados Unidos ha pretendido establecer dominación y hegemonía sobre nuestra Patria y, desde 1959, cambiar el sistema político, económico y social que, en ejercicio de plena autodeterminación, nuestro pueblo libremente ha decidido.

Algunos voceros del gobierno de los Estados Unidos han declarado que la anunciada política hacia Cuba significa un cambio en los métodos, pero no en los objetivos.

De ser así, el proceso hacia la normalización de las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba enfrentará muy serios obstáculos.

El levantamiento del bloqueo será el elemento esencial que dará sentido a lo avanzado en estos meses en las relaciones entre ambos países y determinará el ritmo hacia la normalización.

Como ha reconocido el Presidente Barack Obama, la eliminación del bloqueo conviene al interés nacional de los Estados Unidos y es la voluntad de sus ciudadanas y ciudadanos.

No podría aceptarse de ninguna manera, ni sería productivo, pretender condicionar las medidas de levantamiento o modificación del bloqueo a que nuestro país realice cambios internos.

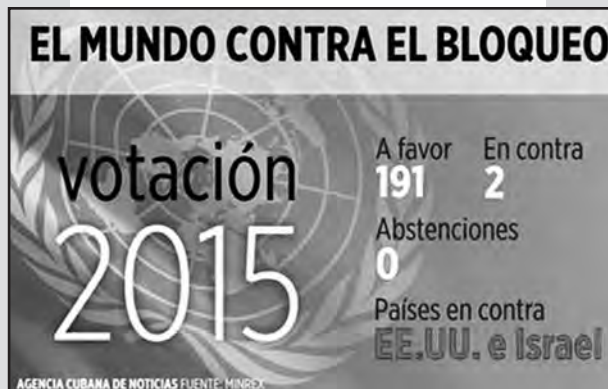
Cuba está dispuesta a aceptar las oportunidades y también los desafíos de una nueva etapa en las relaciones entre ambos países, pero jamás negociará su sistema socialista, ni sus asuntos internos, ni permitirá mancha alguna en la independencia conquistada al precio de la sangre de sus mejores hijos y de enormes sacrificios de muchas generaciones desde el inicio de nuestras guerras de independencia en 1868.

Como ha reiterado el Presidente Raúl Castro Ruz, ambos gobiernos han de encontrar la manera

de convivir de forma civilizada con sus profundas diferencias y avanzar en todo lo posible, en beneficio de los pueblos norteamericano y cubano, mediante el diálogo y la cooperación basados en el respeto mutuo y la igualdad soberana.

Entre los pueblos de Cuba y los Estados Unidos no hay enemistad. El pueblo cubano fue solidario cuando se produjeron los terribles actos terroristas del 11 de septiembre de 2001 o el devastador impacto del huracán Katrina.

Apreciamos y reconocemos los progresos alcanzados en el último período con la reapertura de Embajadas, las visitas del Secretario de Estado y de la Secretaria de Comercio y el intercambio de delegaciones; el funcionamiento de una Comisión Bilateral, la ampliación de las áreas de diálogo y cooperación, principalmente en materia de seguridad aérea y de la aviación, enfrentamiento al narcotráfico, la emigración ilegal y la trata de personas, aplicación y cumplimiento de la ley, protección del medio ambiente y salud, entre otros.



Estamos sinceramente interesados en ampliar provechosos vínculos, ofrecer hospitalidad a las ciudadanas y ciudadanos norteamericanos que disfruten de la libertad de viajar a Cuba, profundizar los intercambios culturales, deportivos, científicos y académicos, la cooperación multifacética en áreas de interés común, el comercio y la inversión.

Partiendo de grandes diferencias y con carácter recíproco, hemos iniciado un diálogo sobre derechos humanos.

Nos guían para todo ello los principios de la Proclama de América Latina y el Caribe como Zona de Paz, firmada por los Jefes de Estado y Gobierno de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños en enero de 2014, en La Habana, así como los propósitos y principios de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.

Esto podría ser también una modesta contribución a la búsqueda de otra forma de relacionarnos los seres humanos y las naciones en esta época de crisis global, inevitable impacto del cambio climático, guerras no convencionales que desatan conflictos atroces, nuevas formas de terrorismo, la existencia de enormes arsenales nucleares, insólitos gastos en armamento y el riesgo de pandemias.

Como expresó en esta sala, hace ya 15 años, el líder histórico de la Revolución Fidel Castro Ruz, "La humanidad debe tomar conciencia de lo que hemos sido y de lo que no podemos seguir siendo. Hoy nuestra especie ha adquirido conocimientos, valores éticos y recursos científicos suficientes para marchar hacia una etapa histórica de verdadera justicia y humanismo. Nada de lo que existe hoy en el orden económico y político sirve a los intereses de la humanidad. No puede sostenerse. Hay que cambiarlo".

Señor Presidente:

Veintitrés años después de adoptada por primera vez esta resolución, hemos alcanzado en el 2015 un notable progreso.

Ha sido el premio a la denodada resistencia, el abnegado esfuerzo, la firmeza de convicciones de nuestro pueblo y el liderazgo de la generación histórica de la Revolución encabezada por el Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz y el Presidente Raúl Castro.

Agradecemos profundamente a todos los gobiernos y pueblos, parlamentos, fuerzas políticas y movimientos sociales, representantes de la sociedad civil, organizaciones internacionales y regionales que, en particular en esta Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, han contribuido con su voz y su voto, año tras año, a fundamentar la justeza y la urgencia de la eliminación del bloqueo.

Hemos llegado aquí también gracias al mayoritario y creciente apoyo del pueblo estadounidense a este loable propósito, a quien expresamos nuestra

gratitud.

Sabemos que es largo y difícil el camino que tenemos por delante. Mientras el bloqueo persista, seguiremos presentando el proyecto de resolución.

El pueblo cubano no renunciará jamás a su soberanía ni al camino que libremente ha escogido para construir un socialismo más justo, eficiente, próspero y sostenible. Tampoco desistirá en la búsqueda de un orden internacional más equitativo y democrático.

Señor Presidente:

Distinguidos Representantes Permanentes:

Estimados Delegados:

Hemos presentado un proyecto de resolución que reconoce la realidad de la estricta y opresiva aplicación del bloqueo contra Cuba y que también saluda y reconoce, en nuevos párrafos preambulares, los progresos alcanzados en el último año.

En nombre del heroico, abnegado y solidario pueblo cubano, les pido votar a favor del proyecto de resolución contenido en el documento A/70/L.2 "Necesidad de poner fin al bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto por los Estados Unidos de América contra Cuba".

Muchas gracias.

By Azza Rojbi

"I don't want to bring children into this life," he says. "It's better to die without children in Syria than it is to bring children into the world as refugees. How can you build a life on a foundation like this?"

Mohamed, a 23-year-old newly married Syrian living in a refugee camp in Jordan, in an interview with The New York Times.

Since 2011, the "Civil War" in Syria, created and fueled by the U.S., its puppets and proxy groups has claimed over 220,000 lives, with at least 680,000 injured according to a United Nations estimate. Furthermore, the UN estimates that over 10 million people were displaced and 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. In the year 2015 alone, one million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes, some of them for the second or third time. Another tragic milestone was recorded in early July 2015 when the number of registered refugees reached four million – the largest refugee population from a single conflict worldwide in over a quarter of a century according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHRC). The human cost of this brutal war drive by imperialist forces has been immense and we continue to see one of humanity's oldest civilizations reduced to ruin. In the recent months human civilization mourned the loss of ancient temples and artifacts at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Palmyra, destroyed by ISIS/ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham) terrorist groups. The site of Palmyra was once one of the most important cultural centers of the ancient world.

The New Era of War & Occupation

The U.S. and its allies used the justification of "humanitarian interventions" and fighting terrorism to start and fuel the war against the independent government of Syria. When we look at the global scale we see many other examples of imperialist war and destruction.

With the excuse of 9/11 (September 11, 2001) imperialist forces launched the new era of war and occupation, starting with the invasion and still ongoing occupation of Afghanistan. Since then the U.S. and its allies have targeted every country in the Middle East and North, East and West Africa that has an independent and anti-imperialist government. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya are completely destroyed and currently Syria and Yemen are fighting against the ongoing imperialist aggression.

What they have done to Syria?

Full of ancient Mosques, Roman temples and ruins, castles and souks, Syria has been a cradle of civilization for at least 10,000 years. It has been part of the major empires of history and a melting pot of religion and ethnicity. Today Syria is a country plunged into sectarian war

ASSAD MUST STAY! IMPERIALISTS MUST GO!

Colonial Powers Advocate and Impose Terrorism in Syria!

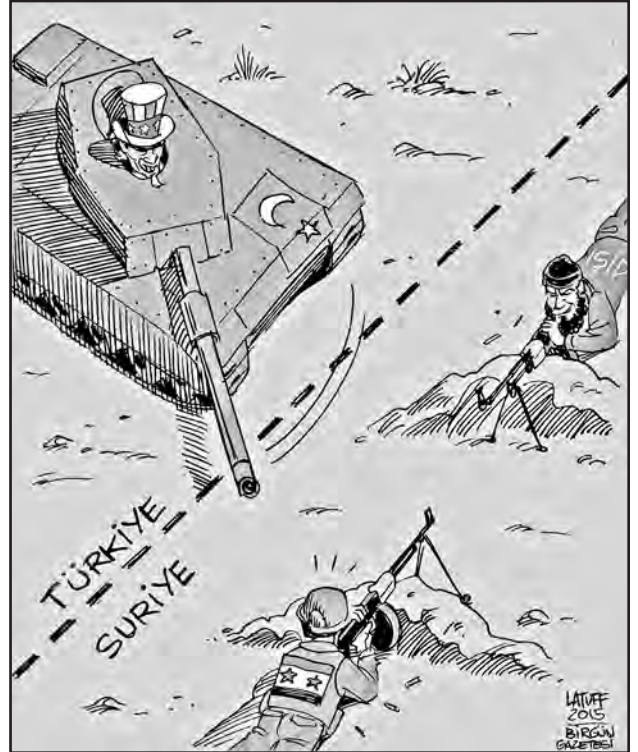
and destruction created by the U.S., Turkey, Saudi Arabia and their proxy groups.

A recent UN-backed report says the war in Syria has plunged 80 percent of its people into poverty, reduced life expectancy by 20 years, and led to massive economic losses estimated at over \$200 billion since the conflict began in 2011. This report released by the Syrian Center for Policy Research, also reveals that unemployment rate has surged to 57.7 percent from 15 percent in 2011, four out of five Syrians are now living in poverty while two-thirds are unable to secure basic food and essentials for daily living. The report also cited that education is also "in a state of collapse" with 50.8 percent of school-age children no longer attending school during 2014-2015 and almost half losing three years of schooling. The country's health care system also deteriorated greatly since the start of the imperialist war and aggression on Syria. Over half of the country's hospitals were destroyed which leaves many ill and injured without access to basic medical care.

Suggested Colonial Solutions for Syria?

According to a study by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the war on Syria is forcing a family to flee every minute. Videos, pictures and accounts of the horrific reality of life in Syria and the atrocities committed by the U.S. backed terrorists in that country are constantly surfacing. With this humanitarian crisis approaching its 5th year, the failure of all political dialogues and moves to bring peace becomes very clear. Years of talks, U.N. resolutions passed, conferences at fancy hotels, backroom deals and no solution in sight! One starts to wonder if these were ever genuine efforts for peace.

In March 2012, Kofi Annan launched the "six-point peace plan for Syria". Less than five months later, Kofi Annan resigned from his position as the special envoy to Syria from the U.N. and the Arab League. In his



resignation letter he wrote, "As an envoy, I can't want peace more than the protagonists, more than the security council or the international community, for that matter." He also referred to this so called "peace plan for Syria" as "mission impossible". A year and a half after succeeding Kofi Annan, Lakhdar Brahimi also resigned from his position following the failure of two rounds of peace negotiations in Geneva.

It becomes more evident that all these political moves and talks are not to bring peace to Syria. It is a way for imperialist forces to buy time to train and arm their puppet and terrorist groups and a platform to further scapegoat the government of Syria.

The U.S. and its allies have never cared about the interest or the well being of the people of Syria. Their only demand and concern was the overthrow of the independent Syrian government in favor of expanding their hegemony in the Middle East & North Africa. The monotone slogan "Assad must go" became like a broken record repeated by their politicians and media.

At a press briefing on September 14, 2015 the White House Press Secretary Joshua

Earnest said responding to a reporter question about Syria

“The international community has decided that it’s time for Assad to go. He clearly has lost legitimacy to lead. He has lost the confidence of those citizens of his country -- at least the ones that -- or I guess I should say particularly the ones that he is using the resources of the military to attack.”

Who is this international community that decided what’s best for the Syrian people? The one that led the destruction of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya? The one that keeps its eyes closed to the Israeli occupation and massacre of the Palestinian people? The one that keeps its doors and borders shut to the refugees fleeing wars and occupations? Or maybe the one that avoids to talk about the Saudi mass killings of the Yemeni people?

The hypocrisy and arrogance of the U.S. and its allies is flagrant. What legitimacy does the U.S. have to dictate the fate of other independent nations or to pretend to be a champion of human rights? The fact is that the UN Torture Report released in 2014 condemns the U.S. government as the leading violator of human rights. This same U.S. government that claims the right to bully, blockade, and attack any country in the world in the name of “human rights” and “democracy” is guilty of the most heinous crimes.

Therefore to the war mongers in Washington chanting “Assad Must Go” the appropriate response is “No, Imperialism Must Go!”

Assad Is Not the Problem, the U.S. is the Problem!

The U.S. and its allies have been pursuing their strategies to overthrow the Syrian government for years now by supplying logistical and military aid to their proxy groups in Syria. Now the U.S. is claiming to be also fighting terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. The same terrorist groups it has created and armed.

On October 9, 2015, the U.S. government announced an “operational pause” of the disastrously failed 500 million dollar Pentagon program for arming and training “vetted rebels” in Turkey and sending them back across the border into Syria. Instead, the U.S. announced it is shifting its policy to support the already existing groups on the ground by providing them with arms and ammunition as well as close air support from warplanes deployed by the U.S. and its so-called coalition.

This announcement was preceded by a letter sent to the State Department, the Pentagon and the C.I.A. on October 2nd, by four senators

— three Democrats and a Republican — criticizing the training program “The Syria Train and Equip Program goes beyond simply being an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars. As many of us initially warned, it is now aiding the very forces we aim to defeat. On Friday, USCENTCOM confirmed that some of the fighters they had trained and equipped had turned over ammunition and trucks to al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria, Al Nusra Front. In exchange for safe passage, the fighters, trained by the U.S. gave up approximately 25% of their U.S.-issued equipment.”

Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have also been playing a big role in facilitating the training and arming of these terrorist groups in Syria. They carried out the dirty work of the U.S. and other imperialist governments in the hope to get a piece of the pie and to serve their own regional aspirations and interests including consolidation of their own unstable and shaky governments with the help of imperialist powers.

An ISIS commander told the Washington Post on August 12, 2014 that fighters from ISIS/ISIL and the al-Nusra Front — an al-Qaeda offshoot — were treated at Turkish hospitals. He also said in the same interview “Most of the fighters who joined us in the beginning of the war came via Turkey, and so did our equipment and supplies.”

In an interview with BBC published on October 18, 2015, a high ranked Saudi official announced that Saudi Arabia is stepping up its supplies of modern, high-powered weaponry to some rebel groups fighting the Syrian government. He said, “the weapons would go to the Free Syrian Army and other small rebel groups.” Saudi Arabia and its imperialist masters continue to supply “rebels” of the Free Syrian Army with material support, even as “hundreds of fighters under the command of

the opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA) have reportedly switched allegiance to al-Qaeda-aligned groups,” according to a 2013 report by Al-Jazeera.

It is clear that the goal for the U.S. led coalition to fight ISIS/ISIL was never to eliminate the terrorist group. Their main goal is to create more chaos and destabilization in Syria like they have done in Libya.

On September 27, 2015 Iraq said it had reached a deal to share intelligence with Russia, Iran and Iraq as part of an effort to defeat ISIS/ISIL. After a formal request from the Syrian government for military help against terrorist groups in Syria, the coalition of Russia, Iran and Syria started its campaign to eradicate ISIS/ISIL and other terrorist groups. Since then the Russian military air campaign has destroyed hundreds of terrorist camps and facilities in Syria and helped decisively the Syrian army to launch many new successful military offensives against terrorist groups.

On an interview with CBC’s Power & Politics, the Russian ambassador to Canada Alexander Darchiev said that Canada’s participation in the U.S.-led coalition air strikes — which began more than a year ago — have been a failed mission with few tangible results.

Darchiev said, “You can’t have political process [to end the civil war] unless you defeat ISIS, and Western obsession with toppling Assad was one of the major reasons why ISIS was able to expand so dramatically.”

Darchiev responded to the U.S. claims that more than 90 percent of Russian air strikes have been directed at the so-called moderate forces in Syria “There is no such species, militarily, as the so-called moderate opposition. We are asking our American friends to show us who these people are... We cannot distinguish between good and bad

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12 Years of MAWO

Mobilization Against War & Occupation

Organizing Against War and Occupation

*By Alison Bodine &
Janine Solanki*

People around the world were shocked to see the news on October 3rd, 2015, when a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan was destroyed by U.S. airstrikes. 30 innocent people, medical staff and patients included, were killed in this brutal and targeted attack. However this newsworthy tragedy is only one of the daily tragedies that imperialist forces and their allies inflict upon the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Ukraine and many other oppressed countries. In the last 14 years since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, a new era of war and occupation has been fuelled by a global economic crisis and the competition of imperialist governments for control of human and natural resources. Whether in the form of direct military invasions, sanctions, covert intelligence operations, drone bombings or proxy wars this rivalry and battle for hegemony has caused unthinkable devastation and bloodshed, especially throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

The depth of the destruction can be seen by looking at only two countries, Iraq and Syria. Iraq, after 12 years of war and occupation, is now facing a new U.S.-led war and attempt to divide their country. Today, the United Nations estimates that there are at least 8.2 million people in Iraq in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. For over one year an imperialist coalition, which includes Canada, has been bombing Iraq with the excuse of fighting the ISIS/ISIL terrorist force. ISIS/ISIL has been at best created by the conditions of U.S. promoted sectarianism in Iraq and U.S. fomented civil war in Syria, and at worst directly funded and armed under the cloak of U.S. support for so-called "moderate rebels" in Syria. The result for Syria is that now 40% of the population is displaced, 4 million of whom have fled the country as refugees.

Already in this new era of war and occupation Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya have had been completely devastated and had their social fabric torn apart, while the great cradles of our human history and civilization have been destroyed. Syria is now facing the same vicious onslaught.

When we look back over the last 14 years of the new era of war and occupation it is clear that an active antiwar movement is a necessary human response to this callous destruction. As people from Iraq and Afghanistan to Syria and

Palestine fight every day against war, occupation and imperialist intervention, we as peace-loving people have no choice but to join with them in the struggle.

We Must Demand "Self-Determination for All Oppressed Nations!"

Since its founding 12 years ago on October 29, 2003 in Vancouver, Canada, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has been at the forefront of antiwar organizing and the struggle against the new era of war and occupation.

As MAWO marks 12 years of antiwar action, it is with many achievements and challenges, all of which are an important experience on how to organize as part of building an effective antiwar movement. One of the most important aspects of our work has been that MAWO has maintained a solid and clear antiwar position, following the guiding political line of self-determination for all oppressed nations. Simply put, this means that people have the right to determine the future of their own nations free of imperialist intervention of any kind. It is on this foundation that MAWO has built our campaigns, slogans and statements, through hundreds of events and direct actions against war and occupation.

Armed with the slogan of "Self-Determination for All Oppressed Nations" as our foundation and basic program, MAWO has taken up the task of setting an example of how an antiwar organization can educate, organize and mobilize.

Educate, Organize, Mobilize!

The opinion of the majority of people in Canada around issues of war and occupation are often shaped by a manipulative and sophisticated pro-war mass media. This makes mass education, and countering this gigantic and deliberate misinformation campaign, a critical task for an antiwar organization. In the last 12 years, MAWO

has made educational events and actions the backbone of our work, through dozens of public forums and discussions each year, conferences, workshops, seminars, and our Student Week Against War and Occupation activities held on campuses throughout Metro Vancouver. Each event features multimedia and speakers, and sparks discussion and debate that help to make war and occupation an issue for people in their everyday life. MAWO literature helps to spread antiwar politics beyond MAWO's events. There are now 55 editions of the MAWO newsletter full of news and articles, and MAWO statements which take our antiwar analysis around the world. Even the act of petitioning, which we do at every monthly antiwar rally, is an educational process when you see every signature on a petition as a conversation about antiwar politics!

In fact, MAWO's rallies and petition campaigns are an example of another important cornerstone of antiwar organizing. To be effective, antiwar education must not stop at a discussion in a room, it must be taken out into the streets and turned into antiwar action. Every month for the last 12 years MAWO has organized a rally and petition campaign in downtown Vancouver in order to bring antiwar politics into the lives of people passing by and maintain momentum for the antiwar voice in Canada. These actions are also in themselves a form of education, when a passer-by sees our slogans on banners and picket signs, or perhaps stops to hear a speaker on the mic, pickup some information or get into a conversation with MAWO organizers.

We have also taken antiwar action directly to the offices of the war machine in Canada. As part of our "Canada Out of Afghanistan Campaign" MAWO organized 74 monthly pickets in front of the Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment Centre, first in downtown Vancouver, and then following the office when it moved to New Westminster.

Beyond events that are the typical for an antiwar group MAWO has also worked to bring creativity and culture into our organizing. One of MAWO's first events as an antiwar coalition was the Vancouver International Film Festival for Peace. By our 10th festival, this event had



MAWO's monthly antiwar rally & petition drive in downtown Vancouver.



'Canada Out of Afghanistan Now!': MAWO's monthly picket at the Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment Centre.

become an institution and truly a one of a kind example of how the medium of film can bring the brutality of war and occupation home for people and encourage them to get involved. The films that MAWO has shown have spanned the decades and come from every corner of the world. In the early days of our festivals we also found that there was a lack of films about Canada's role in the new era of war and occupation, and so our own organizers created the film "Canada: Imperialist At Home, Imperialist Abroad" to fill this gap.

Hip Hop, from rapping to graffiti, has become a global phenomenon of expression in oppressed communities, from the explosion of Hip Hop in Palestine to the multitude of Indigenous Hip Hop artists rapping about conditions on reservations in Canada. Recognizing this potential to mobilize a new community against

war, we have also organized nine Hip Hop for Peace festivals. Over the years this festival has given a much-needed platform to progressive and socially conscious Hip Hop artists, and fostered an encouraging trend of Hip Hop artists creating music with more antiwar themes, and brought them into day-to-day antiwar organizing. MAWO's Hip Hop for Peace Festival is also an important avenue for reaching out to youth. The festival works to build a culture of antiwar activism that encompasses youth as an important layer of society that should be more involved in antiwar politics.

These festivals, as well as MAWO's regular antiwar cultural nights, are not just "using" art to bring forward an antiwar message, but recognizing that art reflects our human experiences which in today's world include experiences of war, occupation and oppression.

Another part of creativity is the way that we can use every avenue of media available to us to spread our antiwar message. This includes sending our regular press releases about our work to mainstream, community and ethnic media, in a constant appeal to them to broadcast the antiwar voice in Canada. From our experience, although mainstream media does not often choose cover the events that we organize, we have found that when they are looking for an antiwar perspective, they know how to find it.

MAWO also works with smaller media, including community and ethnic newspapers, as well as radio. In today's world of ever-expanding social media we are always working to use social media, from facebook to twitter to youtube and beyond, as a tool for propagating antiwar messages and building our work as an antiwar coalition.

Fighting the War at Home and Abroad

The new era of war and occupation has not only been waged against poor and oppressed people abroad, but has come with a war against people here in Canada too. From defending the right of Indigenous people to control their land and resources, to standing with students and teachers rallying for lower tuition and better education, to joining in the struggle against racism and Islamophobia, as an antiwar coalition in Canada it is our responsibility to connect the war abroad to the war at home and unite these struggles together to build a stronger movement.

This war at home begins with the very foundation

of Canada, as a colonial state that began with the genocide of Indigenous people. The government of Canada has continued their attack on Indigenous people through the theft of their land and continual denial of their rights and self-determination. This is why the demand of self-determination for Indigenous nations in Canada is ever-present in our rallies and events. We have also organized, as well as supported the struggles of Indigenous people from fundraisers for legal defense campaigns to participating in protests and demonstrations for land and resource rights.

Especially over the last 14 years, poor and working people in Canada have faced increasing cuts to education and social services like healthcare and affordable housing. Part of MAWO's work is to encourage people to ask why the government of Canada is spending billions of dollars on fighter jets and missiles, while they are neglecting the basic needs of people here in Canada. When this connection is put into perspective we feel that people in Canada will start to see how much we have in common with people facing Canada's brutal war machine in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

MAWO has also brought attention to how war and occupation is destroying the environment. From depleted uranium that has polluted entire cities in Iraq for millions of years to



MAWO's Public Forum's to discuss issues of war and occupation.

come, to pipelines threatening Indigenous communities and their livelihood in Canada, our demand is "No to War and Occupation, No to Environmental Degradation"

One of the largest attacks on human rights in Canada has been signed into law in the last year, the "Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015" also known as Bill C-51. This legislation has given sweeping powers to government agencies to spy on and disrupt political activity and action in Canada, bringing with it a new, vague definition of terrorism. Bill C-51 has opened the door to the targeting of antiwar and other social justice activists. This dangerous legislation has reinforced the government of Canada's campaign of Islamophobia, which the government uses to justify their wars abroad and silence dissenting voices at home.

While all of these struggles, from local to international, can seem like separate issues, it is only when we are united in working together, supporting and acting in solidarity with each

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Poster for one of MAWO's Film Festival for Peace

**FREE ALL
POLITICAL
PRISONERS
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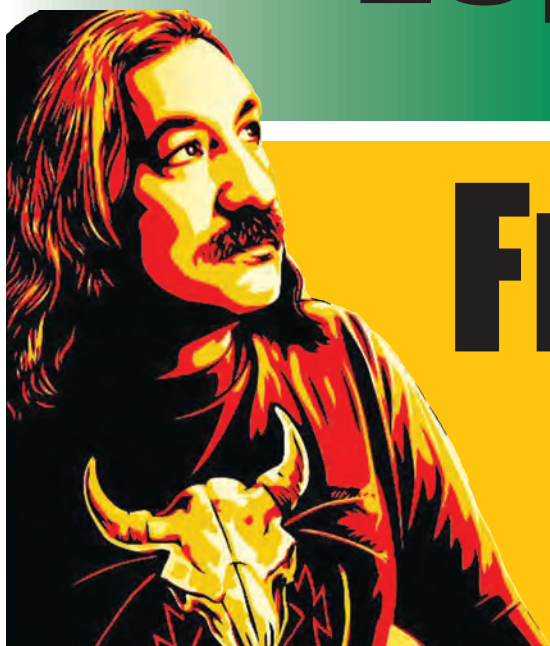


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Revolutionary Venezuela Advances Social Equality

What is at Stake in the Upcoming Election?

By Alison Bodine & Macarena Cataldo

In December of 1998 the people of Venezuela changed the course of history in Venezuela with a gigantic victory for the people of Latin America and oppressed people around the world with the election of Hugo Chávez Frías as president of Venezuela. The Bolivarian Revolution, led by Comandante Chávez, quickly began to make fundamental changes to improve the lives of the mass majority of poor and oppressed people in Venezuela, initiating a process that continues on today to erase the devastation caused by 500 years of colonization and foreign intervention.

Leading up to this historic moment, the people of Venezuela were plagued with the legacy of Spanish colonization, the genocide of indigenous people, slavery, and continuous imperialist intervention in the political and economic life of their country, including numerous U.S.-backed coup d'états, military dictatorships and economic crisis. Poverty and hunger were the reality for a majority of Venezuelans.

The Gains of the Bolivarian Revolution

However, this changed when the Bolivarian revolution started in 1999. The revolution recovered the dignity of the poor people and working class in Venezuela, showing to Latin American and all oppressed people that a better world is possible.

On December 6, 2015 the people of Venezuela are going to the polls to elect a new National Assembly. This election is a crucial step in keeping the revolutionary process moving forward, and a majority in the National Assembly would guarantee the power of the people and the continuity of the revolutionary process. But, what exactly are the gains that the people of Venezuela are fighting to protect in this election?

The Bolivarian revolutionary process started when Chávez took office in 1999, following his election in December 1998. The first thing that Chávez did was to schedule a referendum on whether or not Venezuelans wanted to convoke a constitutional assembly to re-write the constitution. The referendum passed with resounding support and the Venezuelan constitution was then crafted and

approved with the participation of the people of Venezuela. It is widely recognized to be one of the world's most progressive and forward-thinking constitutions that outright secures the basic human and political rights of the people of Venezuela. For example, it requires the state to promote sustainable agriculture, protect the environment, guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples, take affirmative action against the effects of institutionalized discrimination. It also guarantees every Venezuelan the right to a fair wage, health care, and a secure food supply.

As a result of the new constitution and the policies of the revolutionary government the people of Venezuela have made tremendous gains:

- Venezuela social spending is at approximately 60% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Venezuela has the third lowest poverty levels in Latin America and the Caribbean after Argentina and Uruguay
- Poverty rates in Venezuela have fallen dramatically from 1999 to 2015, the poverty rate decreased from 42.8% to 27.5 %
- The rate of extreme poverty dropped from 16.6% to a record low of 5.4%
- Venezuela jumped from 83rd in the year 2000 to 67th in 2014 in the ranking of human development index (HDI) of the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP)
- The GINI coefficient, which represents a calculation of inequality in a country, fell from 0.46 in 1999 to 0.398 in 2013, meaning that Venezuela has the lowest level of inequality (the smallest gap between rich and poor people) in all of Latin America. This is due to the huge improvement of wealth distribution to the benefit of poorest people.
- Venezuela's constitution also grants people the right to proper housing, a guarantee that has been turned into reality through the Great Housing Mission. The mission has now

constructed a total of 752,585 housing units. The Venezuelan government is building an average of more than 200 units each day.

- Venezuela was declared illiteracy free in 2005
- Recently, the Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announced a 30% increase in the national minimum wage and food tickets, effective November 1. This marks the fourth raise in the minimum wage this year and the 30th over the last fifteen years. This measure nearly triples the amount Venezuelans receive in food tickets, which can be used to purchase food and other everyday items
- From when it first began until 2014, the medical Mission Barrio Adentro provided 618 million medical consultations and saved 1.7 million lives.
- In 2015 Venezuela was re-elected to a second consecutive term on the Geneva-



President Nicolas Maduro inaugurated the 700,000th house built for the most needy Venezuelans on Sunday April 19 2015.

based UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), with the backing of 131 countries. In addition Venezuela also received firm support in its re-election bid from 100 civil society groups from diverse countries across the globe "In the last 15 years, with the adoption of the Bolivarian Constitution, Venezuela has been exemplary in its advances in the promotion and protection of human rights," read a public statement signed by the grassroots organizations.

The Intervention of the U.S. and Their Allies

From the beginning of the revolution the imperialist forces have maintained a siege on Venezuela. In April 2015, U.S. President Obama declared that Venezuela represents a “threat” to US foreign policy, in essence, giving the U.S. government more power to directly intervene in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

However it wasn't the first time that the U.S. has attacked Venezuela and it will not be the last one either, we can remember, for example, the U.S.-backed coup against Chávez in 2002 which was overturned by the mass mobilization of the Venezuelan people in support of their president and revolution.

It is also important that we ask ourselves, why did Obama declare a ‘national emergency’ and claim that Venezuela represents a threat to US national security and foreign policy? This is because over the last 14 years of the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuela has successfully proposed and supported Latin American integration (through ALBA, CELAC, UNASUR and other regional economic agreements) and this regional organization represents a “threat” to the hegemonic power of the U.S. on the region. Venezuela is a threat to the U.S. because it supports these alternative diplomatic and economic organizations which serve the economic and political interests of oppressed people in Latin America, and rejects those promoted by the U.S. government and their allies. They attack Venezuela for the same reason that they have been attempting to overthrow the Cuban revolution since it triumphed in 1959. Under the leadership of the Cuban revolution, Cuba, Venezuela other progressive governments in Latin America like Ecuador and Bolivia are fighting back against centuries of colonial and imperialist domination, and encouraging other oppressed countries to do the same!

The imperialist siege has also continued in other ways. This past November 2, the U.S. State Department official Thomas Shannon announced that he would seek new sanctions against Venezuela. Shannon indicated that US sanctions against Venezuelan officials “will be an important tool for us and we will use it if necessary.” Shannon's remarks come on the heels of recent statements by US Southern Command chief John Kelly last week, who warned that Venezuela lies on the brink of a social “implosion,” a dangerous suggestion given the recent history of U.S. backed coups in Venezuela and Latin America.

These attacks are not the only ones available to imperialist forces in their mission to overthrow the revolutionary government of Venezuela. In the same way that the U.S. government and secret services did with Chile in 1973, during the progressive and socialist government of Salvador Allende, they are trying to destabilize President Maduro's government by means of an economic war. The U.S. is financing and supporting the internal opposition in Venezuela, which represents

the interests of the capitalist class that still exists in Venezuela despite the gains made by the Bolivarian Revolution. Through them, the U.S. government and their allies are able to control the distribution and production of vital products for daily consumption such as coffee, flour and toilet paper. In this way they aim to provoke the people of Venezuela to lose the in their revolutionary government.

Electoral Process in Venezuela, An Act of Revolutionary and Participatory Democracy

Elections in Venezuela have undergone significant changes since the days of U.S.-backed military coups and massive electoral fraud. In fact, following the 2012 election of President Hugo Chávez, the former President of the United States Jimmy Carter declared the election process in Venezuela “the best in the world.” The advanced electronic voting machines, which use finger printing and printed receipts for verification would seem out of place even in countries like the U.S. and Canada. Furthermore, the electoral process and voter registration in Venezuela is the same no matter what state or country you may live in. This is in contrast to the United States, where voter rules and even the process for appearing on the ballot for an election may change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

The first of these changes to the election process in Venezuela came as part the new Constitution (passed in the year 2000) which created the National Electoral Council (NEC). The NEC is a 5th branch of the Venezuelan government, independent from the other branches, whose role is to run the elections. The five members of the NEC are all elected by the National Assembly.

On December 6, Venezuelans will be electing 167 deputies to the National Assembly to represent 87 electoral districts. Two-thirds of these deputies are elected through plurality (the candidate who gets the most votes wins) and the other one-third are elected through proportional representation. Three seats in the Venezuelan National Assembly are reserved for representatives of Indigenous nations from the southern, eastern and western regions of the country.

There are two main political alliances running in the Parliamentary election in Venezuela, the Great Patriotic Pole (GPP), led by United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV – Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela) and the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD – Mesa de la Unidad Democrática).

Currently, the majority of the 165 seats in the National Assembly, 98, are held by deputies that support the Bolivarian revolution, 65 seats are held by the opposition and 2 seats are held by deputies that are unaffiliated.

This year's Parliamentary elections will also include a significant development in the representation of women, as the National Electoral Council has ruled that each party must run a minimum of 40% female candidates in the election.

On June 29, 2015 Venezuela's largest political party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) held their primary elections to select their candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Voter turnout to the primary elections was the highest in the 8 year history of the party, which was founded by the late Comandante Hugo Chávez in 2007. Over three million people came out to vote across all 87 electoral districts in Venezuela. This is in contrast to the mere 600,000 votes in 33 districts cast in the primary election of the right-wing opposition party MUD.

The PSUV primary elections were the result of 13,600 grassroots assemblies held throughout Venezuela in April. During these assemblies more than 7,000 candidates were chosen to run in the primaries, half of whom were under the age of 30 and 60% were women.

Sabotage by a Violent and Counter-Revolutionary Opposition

Despite the great initial victory of the PSUV in the success of their primary elections, we must also remember that the December 6th elections in Venezuela are taking place in the context of two years of an escalated economic war against Venezuela. This war and sabotage has been carried out by the existing pro imperialist capitalist class of Venezuela, supported by the U.S. government and their allies, who are determined to overthrow the Venezuelan government and the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution however they find

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Government program ‘Misión Milagro’ (Miracle Mission) provides free care for patients living in poverty and suffering treatable blindness and other vision problems.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADA *STILL* UNDER ATTACK!

By Tamara Hansen

After the October 19, 2015 federal election in Canada my facebook newsfeed has been buzzing with the “great news” that in the 2015 federal election people across Canada elected an all-time record high number of 10 indigenous MPs (Members of Parliament) and also a record-breaking 88 women. But all of the comments, memes and victory rants I have read failed to look at a few important points.

Most importantly, in the days after the election on October 22, 2015, an explosive episode of Radio-Canada’s show *Enquête* was aired. The episode, “Abus de la SQ: les femmes brisent le silence.” (Abuse by the SQ [police]: Women break the silence) featured a group of native women in Val-d’Or, Quebec making strong accusations against the police for abuse of power and sexual exploitation. This story, which has taken over national headlines, was a sharp reminder that despite any changes in Canada’s parliament, in everyday life Indigenous women across Canada are still forced look at the ever growing number of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and ask themselves and the public #AmINext?

Canada’s 2015 election: A victory for Women and Indigenous people?

First, I have to take issues with the numbers presented and ask if in the year 2015 we can really call the election of 10 Aboriginal people and 88 women to parliament a victory? Although technically yes the numbers are “record breaking,” they are still so low!

In the previous parliament Aboriginal MPs made up 7 out of 308 seats, it is true that now there are 10 Indigenous MPs. But what everyone is not talking about is the fact

that they just added 30 new seats to Canada’s parliament, which means Aboriginal MPs went from 7/308 seats to 10/338 seats, that’s a whopping increase of 0.7% (from 2.2% to 2.9% of parliament). These numbers mean Indigenous people continue to be underrepresented, as according to a 2011 StatsCan (Statistics Canada) Household survey, Aboriginal people represent 4.3% of the Canadian population.

The gains in terms of women’s representation in parliament in Canada are similarly deceiving. In 2011, Canada had 77 women in 308 parliamentary seats. Today it has 88 women in 338 seats. This totals a miraculous increase of 1% from 25% to 26% of seats in Canada’s House of Commons – despite the fact that women are 51% of Canada’s population! Not to mention that Canada’s percentage of women in parliament means that when compared to parliaments throughout the world we are around 47th place, right below France and Kazakhstan which both have parliaments which are 26.2% women.

But this is not a numbers game. The bigger question is that when these women and Indigenous Members of Parliament take their seats, will they represent and fight for the issues important to the communities they represent? Three previous examples point to the answer being ‘probably not’. First, Bev Oda a female MP who helped slashed the funding for Canada’s Status of Women agency. Second, Peter Penashue, an Innu MP who spoke on a few occasions disagreeing with having a national enquiry to investigate murdered and missing Indigenous women in Canada. Finally, Rob Clarke, a Cree MP who worked to passed the “Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act” without



any formal consultation with Indigenous communities across Canada. It is true the Indian Act is unpopular, but previous moves to completely eradicate the Indian Act, such as Pierre Trudeau’s failed “White Paper”, have been even more unpopular than the Indian Act itself.

How are Indigenous women doing in Canada?

The statistics from Statistics Canada basically speak for themselves. Outlining some of the gross inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in Canada. According to Statistics Canada:

- In 2001, the estimated life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal females was 76.8 years, over five years less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts who could expect to live, on average, just over 82 years.
- In 2001, Inuit women had a life expectancy of only 71.7 years, more than 10 years less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts!
- Unemployment rates for Aboriginal women were twice as high as those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In 2006, 13.5% of Aboriginal women were unemployed, compared with a rate of 6.4% for non-Aboriginal women.
- In 2006, 35% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had not graduated from high school, whereas the figure was 20% among non-Aboriginal women.
- In 2006, 9% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had a university degree, compared with 20% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

These statistics are not to prove that Indigenous women in Canada are less capable or less motivated, but instead to understand that Indigenous women are not starting from equal footing as non-Indigenous women in Canada. That police forces and politicians are well aware of these statistics, and are doing very little to eradicate these injustices for the next generation. In fact, in many ways they are the reason advances have been so difficult to make.

Indigenous women fight back – the case against the SQ in Quebec

On October 22, 2015 an explosive televised investigation was made public on the Radio-Canada show *Enquête*. Originally the show went to Val-d’Or, Quebec to investigate if police were really doing all they could to solve the case of a single missing Indigenous woman, Sindy Ruperthouse. Sindy is a 44 year old Algonquin woman missing from the Val-d’Or region since the spring of 2014. However, once in Val-d’Or the journalist began meeting with members of the community and uncovered that many local Indigenous women were being abused

by local police officers. Most importantly, the women were tired of living in fear and ready to share their story with the world.

Many of the Indigenous women in the episode of *Enquête* explain that it was a kind of open secret in the community that Indigenous women were often picked up at bars for public drunkenness and driven by cops out of town. They were then forced to walk back to town to 'sober up'. This is not only an illegal, racist and sexist practice, but also very dangerous as women were left in the cold alone on dark unlit roads forced to walk home, which was often several kilometers away. A lesser known secret that many of these women finally felt supported enough to share is that while out on these dark roads these on-duty police officers would often pay or force these women to perform sexual acts.

On October 23, the day after the show aired, the SQ announced it had suspended eight officers for abuse of power and assault, the 9th officer accused is deceased. While officials in Quebec had known about these allegations since May 2015, the SQ had been in charge of investigating itself. On October 23, the Quebec government responded to the outrage created by the program by calling in an external police force to investigate (the Montreal Police).

The Indigenous women in Val-d'Or allowed *Enquête* to document their stories to try to hold the police to account and make the future in Val-d'Or and across Canada safer for their friends, mothers, sisters, daughters and grand-daughters. It is up to the rest of Canada to support these women and make sure that the officers and their bosses are held to account. If we claim that we believe in equality and justice we cannot wait, we have to speak now, because the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women is not static, it is rising.

For anyone trying to make the case that this is a problem of the corrupt SQ, Amnesty International Canada published an article reminding everyone that this is no isolated incident. Unfortunately, this is history repeating itself. They write, "Some details of the allegations in Quebec mirror a well-documented pattern of police abuse in the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan that, even before it came to light publicly, was known among police officers as Starlight Tours. In 2001, two Saskatoon police officers were convicted of "unlawful confinement" for picking up an Indigenous man named Darrel Night and dropping him off on the edge of town in sub-zero weather." Of course, this shows that police across Canada have been using similar

illegal tactics, have been convicted for using these illegal tactics, and yet the police of the SQ still somehow got away with their actions for years.

Join the Campaign for Justice & Demand an Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada

According to a CBC article from October 2014, "the RCMP released a report that



found nearly 1,200 cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women in Canada since 1980. While aboriginal women make up only 4.3 per cent of the Canadian population, the study said, they account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women." For decades family members of the missing and murdered indigenous women, their friends and allies have been protesting and demanding that their cases be taken seriously. In the past few years the most common demand has been for a public inquiry to understand how the cases of these women have been systemically ignored and

uninvestigated.

Many Indigenous groups and organizations across Canada have been fighting for their Inquiry, which the previous Conservative government refused. Justin Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister-Elect has promised an inquiry.

Amnesty International has outlined some points about what an inquiry should look like, writing, "As the accounts from Val d'Or illustrate, such an inquiry must be comprehensive, focusing on the all the forms that violence against Indigenous women takes and the discrimination and marginalization that put Indigenous women at risk. The inquiry must be well-resourced. It must be independent. And it must be designed and guided by Indigenous women, family members of the missed and murdered, Indigenous communities, and leadership." I believe these are solid demands, especially that the shape of the inquiry must be guided by Indigenous communities, and especially Indigenous women themselves. They know more about the open secrets in their own communities that need to be brought to light for them to see justice and a better future.

Of course, the same goes for the investigation in Val-d'Or, there are no independent policing forces. They all have skeletons in their closets and have either ignored the plight of Indigenous people or in many cases actively participated in the assaults and abuses against Indigenous people.

We need to support the women of Val-d'Or and their community in the courageous stand they have taken against injustice. We need to make sure that whatever the outcome of an investigation that the media keeps the spotlight on these women and the community to make them feel protected and safe from the police.

Discussions and debates on these issues are not only happening in the media. There are also informal conversation on social media such as twitter. Hashtags such as #AmInNext? #NoMoreStolenSisters #MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) #MMAW (Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women) are important to follow for this much needed discussion. Finally join Indigenous people across Canada on the streets, there are consistent actions happening across Canada to demand an inquiry and justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women.

CAPITALISM

Killing the Earth & Humanity



By Thomas Davies

It's going to be difficult to find an empty four star hotel room in Paris at the end of November. Presidents, Prime Ministers, Environmental Ministers and the inevitable trailing bands of advisers, lobbyists and public relations officers will be descending on the French capital for the yearly UN Climate Conference - COP21. This conference, like every other UN Climate Conference for well over a decade, is being billed as an urgent and possibly final opportunity for world leaders to commit to substantial changes to environmental policy and enforcement before the planet is pushed past a "point of no return" of environmental destruction and climate change. It's no joke, and it's made even worse by the fact that the previous conferences have all thoroughly failed despite initial optimism.

The good news is that a growing international movement actually understands the urgency and has begun using these big events as opportunities to demonstrate its size and popularize its demands. The largest climate march in history happened in New York outside the UN Climate Summit on September 21 of last year. Over 400,000 people joined the "Peoples Climate March" with over 270,000 more participating in 2000 coordinated actions in 166 countries across the globe. Also very important is the fact that revolutionary and progressive Latin-American governments like Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador are creating new economic and climate solutions and proving what is becoming increasingly obvious to more and more people: You cannot save the environment if creating profit continues to be the driving force of society. We cannot save the planet with "business as usual." No UN Conference, no matter how much hype, can solve the climate crisis as long as capitalism is the dominant global economic system.

Chevron in Ecuador – the Chernobyl of the Amazon

Chevron, the world's seventh largest oil and gas company, has been found repeatedly guilty in Ecuadorian courts of massive environmental contamination stemming from its oil drilling operations in the Amazon rainforest (under the Texaco brand) in Ecuador from 1964

to 1992. It has been proven time and time again that Texaco, which merged with Chevron in 2001, knowingly operated without concern for the environment or wellbeing of local residents. Their most drastic crimes include:

- Dumping 18 billion gallons of waste water into rivers and streams.
- The construction of more than 900 open-air, unlined toxic waste pits that leach toxins into soil and groundwater.
- Release of contaminants through spills, spreading oil on roads, gas flaring, and burning of crude.
- The creation of a pipeline and road system that opened pristine rainforest to uncontrolled and widespread clearing, resulting in more than a million acres of deforestation.

Due to Chevron's toxic contamination of their soil, rivers and streams, and groundwater, local indigenous communities continue to suffer an epidemic of cancer, birth defects, miscarriages, and other ailments. Ecuadorian courts have found Chevron liable for 9.5 billion dollars in clean up fees and damages, and today, more than 30,000 Ecuadorians who were directly affected by Chevron's pollution are fighting for justice through a class-action lawsuit.

Why were Chevron's actions so damaging in Ecuador? Was there not better technology available at the time? The answer is simple – in a highly competitive industry they needed to maximize their profits. Industry field manuals at the time required that waste pits be lined and used only for temporary storage. Chevron used unlined pits for permanent storage. Their own documents show the company considered spending money to address environmental problems from use of the pits, but they decided it was too expensive. In the end, by handling its toxic waste in Ecuador in ways that were illegal in the United States, Chevron saved an estimated \$3 per barrel of oil produced.

For savings of \$3 per barrel over 1400 Ecuadorian people have already died unnecessarily from cancer. For \$3 a barrel Chevron ravaged these communities with childhood leukaemia, miscarriages and birth defects. For \$3 a barrel they permanently and massively damaged one of the most diverse and sensitive habitats in the world.

Chevron stripped its assets in Ecuador in 2007 anticipating it would lose the court case. The company, which as an example made almost 27 billion dollars in 2011, has spent roughly 2 billion over the past 2 decades trying to fight not to pay what it owes. Interestingly, the Supreme Court of Canada has found that the Ecuadorian villagers can proceed with a legal claim for the 9.5 billion dollars owed against Chevron's ample assets in Canada.

"This is no longer just a cause in Ecuador – this is a cause for any country where the same thing could happen. We have a responsibility beyond our own interests", said Ecuador's environment minister, Lorena Tapia. "We know this isn't an easy path, but we are very convinced of our arguments, and there is no way we will step down or stop doing everything we can to get the oil company to respond."

Global Phenomenon – Global Disaster

This case is not accidental or exceptional. Chevron knew full well what kind of damages they were creating, but in the cut-throat race for profit these were unimportant. Recently it was exposed that energy giant ExxonMobil had been advised directly by its scientists as early as 1978 that climate change was real, caused by humans, and would raise global temperatures by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius this century. They continued to substantiate these findings in the 1980's and 1990's. As the head of one key lab at Exxon Research wrote to his superiors, there was "unanimous agreement in the scientific community that a temperature increase of this magnitude would bring about significant changes in the earth's climate, including rainfall distribution and alterations in the biosphere".

Despite all of this information, ExxonMobil has been a key player in spending untold millions of dollars in organizing the campaign to instill doubt in the reality of climate change, and the responsibility of human driven industry in its creations. ExxonMobil is the largest oil company in the world, and the most profitable enterprise in human history. While the climate crisis became more and more drastic, they continued to try and suck the earth dry for everything it was worth and hide the consequences.

Environmental Degradation



As resources are used up and dry out, the race for profit under capitalism leads to the development of others in increasingly unsustainable ways. A case in point is the Tar Sands developments in Alberta. According to Greenpeace, "Two tonnes of tar sand is needed to produce a single barrel of oil. Three to five times more water and energy are required per barrel than any other source known to mankind. The tar sands use more water every day than a city of two million people and consume enough natural gas to heat six million Canadian homes."

"The tar sands generate 40 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, more than all the cars in Canada combined. Because of the tar sands, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have grown more since 1990 than those of any other G8 nation, according to the 2009 national inventory report that Environment Canada filed with the United Nations."

"Key waterways like the Athabasca River are being polluted to the tune of 11 million litres of toxic runoff every day"

Changing the Balance of Nature

All of this has even larger consequences, as absolutely everything in nature is connected. Even a slight change in one area, can cause massive and unpredictable consequences in another. This was how Carbon Dioxide became such an important topic. Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which traps more and more of the sun's heat on earth. This causes temperatures to rise, which then causes a whole other series of problems we are currently starting to deal with very directly.

As ExxonMobil was telling us everything was OK, Richard Smith wrote an article, "Green Capitalism: The God that Failed" and outlined the current crisis: "As soaring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions drove global CO₂ concentrations past 400 parts per million in May 2013, shell-shocked climate scientists warned

that unless we urgently adopt "radical" measures to suppress GHG emissions (50 percent cuts in emissions by 2020, 90 percent by 2050) we're headed for an average temperature rise of 3 degrees or 4 degrees Celsius before the end of the century. Four degrees might not seem like much, but make no mistake: Such an increase will be catastrophic for our species and most others. Humans have never experienced a rise of 4 degrees in average temperatures... Sea levels will rise 25 meters - submerging Florida, Bangladesh, New York, Washington DC, London, Shanghai, the coastlines and cities where nearly half the world's people presently live. Freshwater aquifers will dry up; snow caps and glaciers will evaporate - and with them, the rivers that feed the billions of Asia, South America and California."

There is no mistaking it, the climate crisis is real.

There is no "Planet B", but a Better World is Possible

"The capitalist system seeks profit without limits, strengthens the divorce between human beings and nature; establishing a logic of domination of men against nature and among human beings, transforming water, earth, the environment, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice and ethics into goods. In this regard, the economic system of capitalism privatizes the common good, commodifies life, exploits human beings, plunders natural resources and destroys the material and spiritual wealth of the people." - Introduction to Bolivia's national submission to the COP21 Conference

Bolivia is playing an increasingly important role in the global climate debate. Recognizing that the UN Conferences were going nowhere fast, Bolivia organized the "World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Defence of Life". The Conference united social movements and progressive governments to discuss concrete proposals for solving the cli-

mate crisis. The first Conference was in 2010, and the second was completed in October of this year. The final Conference Declaration is 25 pages long and packed with concrete proposals for saving the environment. The key is - all of them prioritize human life and environmental preservation above profits. Once this shift in priorities is made, the possibilities become endless. Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro and Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa were also in attendance and offering full support.

Cuba has been leading the world in sustainability for decades. A World Wildlife Fund study concluded it is the only country in the world with both a high UN Human Development Index and a relatively small "ecological footprint". Bolivia's Constitution specifically recognizes the rights of Mother Earth, but it was Cuba who led the way by amending its own constitution in the 1990's to entrench the concept of sustainable development.

All of this is exciting because it proves that it's not impossible to create meaningful changes to preserve the environment. If relatively poor countries in Latin America can do it, imagine what the wealthy Western capitalist countries could do if the diverted even just their bloated war budgets into sustainable development and solving the climate crisis!

The Way Forward

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Albert Einstein

Many are already forecasting that the COP21 Conference in Paris will be a failure, many more have already realized they are designed to fail. As we wrote in FTT, Volume 9 Issue 10, "Humanity is at an pivotal time. We live on a planet which has more than enough resources to provide for everyone who lives on it. Humans have also developed technologically so incredibly that we have all of the resources available to ensure that everyone has everything they need. Yet we live in a world where the majority go hungry, war and occupation dominate the political landscape and the environment is being rapidly destroyed. As long as the primary driver of society remains profit and not people, this will continue as all other considerations are thrown into the ever growing garbage heap. Climate change is the symptom, capitalism is the problem."

So let the so called "world leaders" get dressed up in expensive suits for their COP21 Conference. We will be marching together in the hundreds of thousands on the streets of Paris, building the global climate justice movement. We also not let those who have been actively destroying the planet dictate to us how to fix it. There is enough human and environmental capacity to make it work, but we need to continue to mobilize the anti capitalist and climate justice movements. Mother Earth, and everyone of us, deserve better.

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade: Vancouver Continues its Promise of a Monthly Campaign to End the Unjust U.S. Blockade of Cuba...



By Sarah Alwell

192 countries in favour, 2 opposed (the US and Israel). That's how the United Nations General Assembly voted on the resolution to condemn the U.S. blockade on Cuba, for the 23rd time, on October 27 2015. An overwhelming and undeniable call to the United States to end the unjust 54 year old blockade of the island. And they aren't the only ones.

The Newly formed group 'Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade - Vancouver' (FCAB-Vancouver) is adding their voice to this international call on the 17th of every month in front of the U.S. Consulate. This October FCAB-Vancouver held their second monthly picket, with peace-loving people from across Vancouver coming together as loud chants and waving Cuban flags once again filled the cloudy skies next to the U.S. Consulate. The anti-blockade activists proudly held up colourful signs declaring "Now, More Than Ever, Let's Break the US Blockade on Cuba!" and "Ahora, Mas Que Nunca Rompamos El Bloqueo".

The picket brought out supporters of Cuba from many different walks of life, students, workers, and retired people. This included rally speakers, David Whittlesey, a long-time civil rights and social justice activist, Tamara Hansen, the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), and Shakeel Lochan, a social justice organizer and poet. David spoke especially about the insanity of the blockade, which for over 54 years has been a key part of the U.S. strategy to overthrow the Cuban government. This failed strategy has cost the Cuban government more than 1 trillion dollars, denying Cubans access to basic medicines and educational supplies.

On December 17, 2014, the government of the US and Cuba announced renewed diplomatic relations. Despite this, and despite the resounding results of the most recent UN vote, the U.S. blockade remains in full force. Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade - Vancouver is committed to organizing monthly picket actions in opposition to the criminal U.S. blockade against Cuba, on the 17th of each month until the U.S. blockade is lifted once and for all!

Join the picket line on December 17th, 4pm, at the U.S. Consulate and add your voice to the growing movement demanding:

END THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA NOW!

RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA NOW!

US GOVERNMENT STOP THE CAMPAIGN OF 'REGIME CHANGE' IN CUBA AND IMMEDIATELY STOP INTERFERING IN CUBA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION!

Please visit the website to find out more: www.vancubavsblockade.org

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possible.

Creating great economic difficulties for people in Venezuela has become the main work of the opposition. Under their sabotage, prices for basic foods and necessities have greatly increased and the national currency of Venezuela, the Bolivar, has dropped dramatically in value. In response, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has introduced new regulations and measures meant to keep the prices and currency under control and cut-down the smuggling of goods from Venezuela to neighbouring countries, particularly Colombia. These measures are added to the protections for poor and working people in Venezuela already in place, including the government missions that guarantee access to food and medical care.

The parliamentary elections are also talking place during a continued campaign of violence by the opposition. As recently as November 3, 2015, a 22 year old Chavista and supporter of the Bolivarian revolution, Eleazer Hernández, was killed when he was attacked by right-wing student activists. This latest attack is reminiscent of the escalation of right-wing violence in Venezuela in February of 2014, a period known as the Marimbas. According to the Venezuelan government these violent protests, often referred to as a "peaceful student movement" in mainstream media,

caused over \$15 billion U.S. dollars in damage and provoked violence that killed 43 people, both pro and anti-government.

Not only during the Parliamentary elections in Venezuela, but all of the time in Venezuela, we have to be clear about one thing. The opposition capitalist class, supported by the U.S. government has one goal in mind with everything that they do, to overthrow the revolutionary government of President Nicolás Maduro and reverse every gain made by poor and working people in Venezuela. The right-wing opposition has nothing to offer beyond this goal, and violence and sabotage are the best tools that they have to achieve it.

As one example of this, Maduro pledged to the National Electoral Council that he will accept the results of the December 6th election. The government of Venezuela has even launched a Twitter campaign to build an environment of peace during the elections, #YoFirmoPorLaPaz (I sign for peace). The violent opposition party MUD has refused to sign this agreement, hoping to rely on violence instead to achieve their own political goals if the election does not go their way.

The Revolution Has Been and Will Be Victorious

Under the leadership of President Hugo Chávez Frías, who died of cancer in 2013,

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If you find Fire This Time to be an effective tool in the struggle of oppressed people for justice, more than ever, we need your support. On top of our regular costs of production, we regularly send members of our editorial board on assignment throughout North America, the Caribbean and beyond in order to make Fire This Time a better resource. These efforts have strained our finances.

If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to "Nita Palmer".

Fire This Time is an independent newspaper and publishing Fire This Time could not be possible without the generous contributions from our supporters.

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Fire This Time!

Campaign for \$20,000 for 2016 A Fundraising Appeal!

October 15, 2015 to January 15, 2016

Dear Fire This Time Reader,

The first Fire This Time newspaper was published in February of 2003, as part of the international movement that organized the largest mobilizations in human history against the invasion of Iraq. It was also a time of deep and drastic government cuts to social programs across Canada. Today, thirteen years later, the only change has been a further escalation of the war against oppressed people at home and abroad. The new era of war and occupation, of which Canada is an active participant, has seen many countries invaded and occupied, millions killed and millions more made refugees. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and the poor is ever increasing and government crackdowns on human rights such as Bill C-51 are used to try and instill fear and silence dissent.

For the last thirteen years, Fire This Time has refused to be silent. We continue to reflect the battle of ideas that is shaping the political, economic and social fabrics of our society. With the perspective that, "Every international fight is local and every local fight is international," we have also continually highlighted the fightback of working and oppressed people across the globe. This has included a special focus on Latin-America, and the revolutionary governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.

IN A WORLD WHERE THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA IS DOMINATED BY A NARROW, CORPORATE AND ANTI-HUMAN AGENDA, FIRE THIS TIME PRESENTS AN ALTERNATIVE THAT IS INTELLECTUALLY HONEST AND PRESENTS FACTS AND ANALYSIS FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED TO KNOW THE TRUTH AND WANT TO BRING ABOUT A BETTER WORLD.

In the past 13 years we have published 70 issues and distributed over 600,000 individual copies of Fire This Time at bus stations, rallies, picket lines, international gatherings and everywhere in between. We see the newspaper as a mobilizer which connects struggles and urges oppressed people to, "Think socially and act politically".

★ ★ In 2012, FTT Editorial Board member Thomas Davies and 2 contributors were assaulted, handcuffed and dragged into police cars for refusing to stop distributing FTTs at the Metrotown Skytrain Station. Once again we were able to mount a popular public campaign which forced the authorities to write a

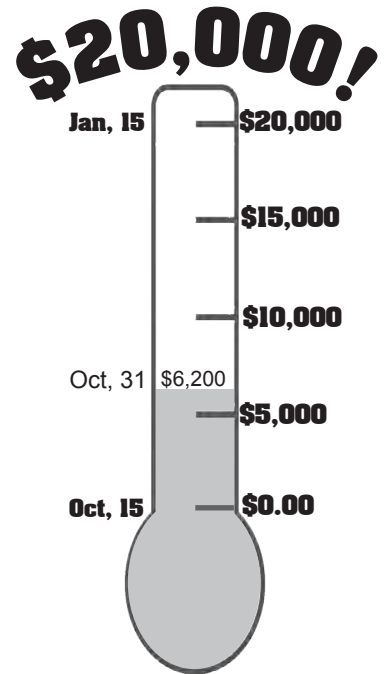
**"The truth must not only be the truth, it must be told."
- Fidel**

written statement acknowledging our right to distribute at the stations. We have since returned time and time again and we refuse to be intimidated.

But now we really need your help!

If you agree that the newspaper is unique and important, we ask you to make a financial contribution, no matter how small (or how large!) to enable us to continue printing in the coming year. We have calculated that we will need a minimum of \$20,000 to continue publishing Fire This Time as a free, monthly, social justice newspaper for 12 months in 2016. We have launched a campaign to raise these funds by January 15, 2016 and we are really counting on your support!

ONE TIME DONATIONS AND MONTHLY SUSTAINING DONATIONS



ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED! ANY DONATION OF A TOTAL OF \$250 OR MORE WILL RECEIVE A BOUND VOLUME OF ALL 12 ISSUES OF NEXT YEARS FIRE THIS TIME NEWSPAPER!

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***Mail a cheque to "Nita Palmer" with the Subject "FTT 2016" to:
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Vancouver, BC
V5L 5G3

***Donate via PayPal Online at www.firethistime.net

Thank you for all the support! We look forward to continuing work together to build a better world!
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Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper

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"Rumbo a Cuba"
Initiative

Iniciativa
"Rumbo a Cuba"



RUMBO A CUBA is fundraising for a much needed tractor & freezer truck for the Julio Antonio Mella International Solidarity (CIJAM) Camp in Caimito, Cuba. CIJAM is where thousands of international guests stay while volunteering in Cuba every year! It has been a real challenge for the camp to provide the necessary services to its guests, especially because of the cruel US blockade. We invite you to join us for the following events to support our campaign!

INICIATIVA RUMBO A CUBA es un proyecto para la compra de un tractor y un camión refrigerado para el campamento de solidaridad internacional Julio Antonio Mella (CIJAM), en Caimito, Cuba. El CIJAM es donde miles de brigadistas internacionales de solidaridad con Cuba se alojan mientras hacen el trabajo voluntario en Cuba. Ha sido un verdadero desafío para el campamento proporcionar los servicios necesarios a sus brigadistas, sobre todo a causa del cruel bloqueo impuesto por los Estados Unidos. ¡Por favor, colabore y participe con nosotros para hacer el trabajo en unidad y hermandad para Cuba!

Good News:

Mario Mendoza of "Grupo Humanitario Latinoamericano Canadiense" in Vancouver who is coordinating with the group as well as collaborating with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, pointed out that this campaign so far has been very successful. To this day they have collected \$5700 and support is growing in other cities in Canada as well. Mario invited all supporters of Cuba to get involved and help to reach the goal of \$10,000 in the campaign.

For more information:

The Rumbo a Cuba Initiative is a project of

VCSC Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba

www.vancubasolidarity.com



Grupo Humanitario de Latinoamericanos Canadienses en Vancouver

www.latinosamericanosenvancouver.com

The Global Peace Council, the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the People, The Cuban Institute of Friendship of the People Call for

IV International Seminar for Peace and elimination of Military Bases



23th-25th of November 2015.
City of Guantánamo, Cuba

For more information email:

- Silvio Platero Yrola, President of the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the People
presidm@enet.cu, movpaz@enet.cu

- Alina Fernández, civil servant,
movpazri@enet.cu

¡Venceremos!

We Will Win!



Cuban medicine achieves over 95% heart surgery survival rate

October 9, 2015 (Granma News)

Cuba has achieved a heart surgery survival rate of over 95%, including coronary and vascular operations and those linked to congenital heart defects, a figure which places the island among the most advanced countries in this field. The information was provided during the Cardiovilla 2015 International Congress, which is being held in the Euro Star Hotel in Cayo Santa María.

According to statements by Dr Eduardo Rivas, president of the Cuban Society of Cardiology, the result corresponds to the will of the Cuban government to improve the population's quality of life, together with the efforts of the existing cardio-surgical network across the country.

He also revealed the excellent results in pediatric heart surgery, with a high rate of effectiveness, as a result of early diagnosis of sick children, with immediate intervention before the disease develops.

He stressed that heart disease remains one of the leading causes of death in Cuba, hence the importance of the work carried out by the 600 doctors who make up the Society of Cardiology in combating these conditions.

The president of the Cuban Society of Cardiology acknowledged the work of the Comandante Ernesto 'Che' Guevara Cardiology Center, which hosted the event, an institution that has the best indicators of the country in the majority of the measurable parameters in this field, including a survival rate for vascular surgery of over 99%.

The event, which brings together cardiac surgeons and other specialists, began on Thursday, October 8, and will continue until Saturday morning. 278 delegates from 21 countries are attending, to discuss various topics of interest related to the specialty, Dr. Raul Dueñas, director of the Cardiology Center, based in Villa Clara, explained.

Among the main topics to be addressed are cardiac and vascular surgery, interventional cardiology, electrophysiology, cardiac imaging and all areas relating to preventive care.

The event will also see the presentation of products from several leading international firms in the manufacture of equipment and supplies for the treatment of heart disease.

CELAC to Present First Joint Agreement at a COP Meeting

November 2, 2015 (teleSUR English)

The 33 member countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are set to agree on a joint position that for the first time ever the bloc will present at a COP climate change summit. The CELAC is meeting this week in Ecuador to discuss their position to be presented in the upcoming COP21, also known as the 2015 Paris U.N. Climate Conference, officials said Monday.

The foreign and environment ministries of the regional organization will meet on Thursday and Friday in the Ecuadorian capital Quito, to elaborate the draft that will be presented in December in Paris, which has been billed as the most important climate summit in history. The meeting will take place at Union of South American Countries (UNASUR) headquarters.

Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to play a very important role at the COP21, since the region has over the past years shown a strong commitment in forging very important global agreements to address climate change.

The Bolivian city of Cochabamba last month held the Second World People's Conference on Climate Change, during which President Evo Morales along with his colleagues from Ecuador, Rafael Correa, and Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, agreed to speak for the "Pachamama," or Mother Earth, and civil society during the COP21 summit in Paris.

The three Latin American leaders also agreed to push forward the creation of an agency for environmental justice, which will force the most polluting countries in the world to recognize the damage they have caused in other nations through exploitation of natural resources and pollution. The proposal also includes the economic reparation for damages caused by those nations.

The main goal of the COP21 meeting is to agree on ways of maintaining global warming below the 2-degree-Celsius threshold, as well as to implement viable solutions worldwide to combat the adverse effects of global climate change.

Thousands of world leaders, high-level officials, experts and representatives are expected to attend the summit in Paris, as well as pressure groups. Massive protests are also expected to be carried out during the summit which is scheduled to last 12 days.

Venezuelan Housing Mission Builds 100,000 Homes in 10 Months

October 20, 2015 (teleSUR English)

The Venezuelan government's housing mission has constructed nearly 100,000 new homes since the start of the year, according to figures released Tuesday.

The mission has now constructed a total of 752,585 housing units, Housing Minister Manuel Quevedo said. In January the ministry put the number of completed housing units at just under 676,000, suggesting the government is building an average of more than 200 units each day.

"At this rate, 1 million people will be provided with homes by the

end of 2015," Quevedo said.

One of the Venezuelan government's most popular social initiatives, the housing mission was first launched to provide shelter for people who lost their homes in devastating floods that hit the country in 2010. However, since then, the mission has expanded to provide low-cost housing to the wider population, with poor families receiving priority. Units are generally provided fully furnished. The houses are offered either for free or at a low cost, depending on the means of the prospective owners.

In 2011, then-President Hugo Chavez explained that the mission would address the "social debt" left behind by former governments that failed to provide quality housing to all Venezuelans.

The current administration of President Nicolas Maduro has vowed to continue expanding the mission, aiming to provide low-cost housing to 40 percent of Venezuelans by the end of the decade.

RETURN GITMO TO CUBA AND PAY REPARATIONS

*By Manuel Yepe**

“Having a sovereign state that is negotiating the normalization of its relations with the United States demand compensation will help increase awareness of the debt that Washington owes to many countries for the many damages it has caused,” wrote columnist Mark Weisbrot, Co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) in Washington, in an article published on October 13 in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

It is also good that the Cubans are raising the issue of the return to Cuba of the territory occupied by the (GITMO) Naval Base the U.S. has illegally maintained for more than a century in Guantanamo in the Eastern part of the island, said Weisbrot.

President Obama initiated a historic change when he decided last December to begin normalizing relations with Cuba. It was an acknowledgment that more than half a century of trying to topple the Cuban government, through invasion, assassination attempts, economic embargo, and other –mostly illegal– efforts had failed.

It was also a concession to the majority of the governments in the hemisphere, which had informed Washington in 2012 that there would not be another Summit of the Americas without Cuba, because they would decline to participate.

However, the U.S. has not considered it necessary to change its objectives towards Cuba, as a number of statements from the U.S. government indicate that the goal of normalizing relations and expanding commerce with Cuba is still “regime change” ...only by other means.

“But it is nonetheless a major step forward,” said Weisbrot. Washington had been isolated in the entire world on this issue of the blockade for decades, with repeated votes against the embargo at the U.N. general assembly. Last year’s tally was 188-2 with only Israel voting with the U.S.

Recently, the Cuban government reiterated its position that in order for relations to be normalized, the U.S. must not only end the blockade but pay compensation for the damage that it has caused to Cuba and its people over the past 54 years.

Cuban President Raúl Castro also reminded Washington that the illegal military base turned into prison that the U.S. maintains in Guantanamo Bay must be closed and the land returned to Cuba.



Detainees in Guantanamo Bay U.S. Military Base

According to Weisbrot, “these are entirely reasonable requests from Cuba considering that, in the early 20th Century, the U.S. occupying power forced Cuba to accede to the military base as a sine qua condition for its “independence.”

“Furthermore,” said Weisbrot, “even if one ignores the how the lease originated, it was granted for a naval and coaling station –not a prison. So the U.S. is violating the terms of the lease, just as if someone rented a residential apartment and used it to sell illicit drugs.”

And GITMO is even more of an offense to Cubans, since it is an illegal prison that has become infamous for its torture and abuse of prisoners, the majority of whom have been cleared for release or have insufficient evidence against them to be prosecuted.

The Cuban demand for reparations is equally sensible. The 54-year blockade has caused tens of billions of dollars of damage in Cuba through shortages of food and medicine, infrastructure needs (including for clean water), foreign investment that was prevented, and other economic and health effects.

The damages are difficult to estimate but certainly many times larger than those claimed by U.S. businesses and individuals who lost property in Cuba in the years following the social revolution.

Weisbrot believes that Washington is unlikely to acknowledge that it owes reparations for its crimes against Cuba, partly because of fear that it would open the floodgates of demands from many nations where the U.S. government has contributed to mass slaughter and the destruction of their material riches.

Bill Clinton is apparently the only modern U.S. president who expressed regret for any of these crimes, apologizing to Guatemala for the U.S. role in the long genocide carried out by the military dictatorships that tyrannized the country the 1950s through the 1980s. But his statement was mostly ignored and quickly forgotten.

www.englishmanualeype.wordpress.com

** Manuel E. Yepe is a lawyer, economist and social scientist. He is an Associate Professor at the Raul Roa Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He served as Ambassador, Director General of the Prensa Latina News Agency, Vice President of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television, founding National Director of UNDP's Technological Information Pilot System (TIPS) in Cuba and Secretary of the Cuban Peace Movement*

A CubaNews Translation

*Edited by Walter Lippmann
www.walterlippmann.com*

*Por Manuel Yepe**

“La demanda de compensación proveniente de un estado soberano que negocia la normalización de sus relaciones con Estados Unidos ayudará a que crezca la comprensión de la extensa deuda que tiene Washington en el mundo por sus atropellos”, manifiesta el escritor y columnista Mark Weisbrot, codirector del Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas (CEPR, por sus siglas en inglés), con sede en Washington, en un artículo aparecido el 13 de Octubre en el Philadelphia Inquirer. También es bueno que haya salido a relucir la situación de la base naval de Estados Unidos (GITMO) que ilegalmente mantiene desde hace más de un siglo en el oriente de la isla y la devolución a Cuba del territorio que ésta ocupa, considera Weisbrot.

El Presidente Obama inició un cambio histórico cuando decidió en diciembre comenzar a normalizar las relaciones con Cuba. Era el reconocimiento del fracaso de más de medio siglo tratando de derrocar al gobierno cubano con invasiones, intentos de asesinatos, bloqueo económico y otras vilezas.

Fue también una concesión a la mayoría de los gobiernos del

hemisferio, que habían hecho saber a Washington en 2012 que, sin Cuba, no habría nuevas Cumbres de las Américas porque, si así fuera, se abstendrían ellos de participar.

Sin embargo, aún Estados Unidos no ha considerado necesario hacer cambios en sus objetivos respecto a Cuba, lo que se constata en varias declaraciones oficiales indicando que el propósito de normalizar las relaciones y expandir el comercio con Cuba es el mismo de antes, cambiar el régimen (regime change)... sólo que por otros medios. No obstante, no hay dudas de que se trata de un gran paso adelante, apunta Weisbrot. Washington llevaba

décadas aislado en su política exterior por el bloqueo a Cuba, con reiteradas votaciones en su contra en la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas. En la votación más reciente, el pasado año, el resultado fue de 188 a 2, con solo Israel votando junto a Estados Unidos.

Recientemente el gobierno cubano reiteró su posición de que para que las relaciones puedan ser normales, Estados Unidos no solo debe terminar el bloqueo, debe también compensar a Cuba por los daños que éste ha causado a la Isla y su pueblo durante los últimos 54 años. El Presidente Raúl Castro recordó además a Washington que, en aras de

el arriendo del territorio para la base, éste fue otorgado para una base naval y estación carbonera, no para una prisión. “Es como si alguien, violando los términos de un arriendo, alquilara un apartamento y lo utilizara para vender drogas ilícitas”. Y GITMO es hoy una ofensa aún mayor para los cubanos, convertida en una prisión notoria por las torturas y otros abusos a prisioneros, la mayoría de ellos declarados no imputables, o sin pruebas contra ellos que permitan su procesamiento.

La demanda cubana de reparaciones es igualmente sensible. El bloqueo de 54 años ha causado a Cuba decenas de millones de dólares de daños, escaseces de alimentos y medicinas, barreras a la inversión extranjera y carencias infraestructurales hasta de agua limpia.

Es difícil calcular los daños del bloqueo a Cuba, aunque se sabe que multiplican muchas veces el monto total de las reclamaciones de los negocios e individuos estadounidenses que perdieron propiedades en Cuba por efecto de la revolución social.

Weisbrot opina que será difícil que Washington reconozca su deuda a los cubanos por los crímenes contra la Isla, porque teme abrir compuertas a las demandas de tantos países en los que el gobierno de Estados Unidos ha contribuido al sacrificio masivo de personas y a la destrucción de sus riquezas materiales.

Bill Clinton es el único presidente moderno de Estados Unidos que ha expresado pesar por los crímenes de su país contra otras naciones. Fue él quien pidió perdón a Guatemala por el papel de Estados Unidos en el prolongado genocidio a cargo de dictaduras militares que tiranizaron ese país desde la década de 1950 hasta la de 1980. Esta declaración de Clinton ha sido prácticamente ignorada.

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**Manuel E. Yepe Menéndez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*

DEVOLVER GITMO E INDEMNIZAR A CUBA



la normalización de relaciones, la ilegal base militar convertida en prisión que mantiene en la bahía de Guantánamo debe retirarse y el territorio que ocupa devuelto a Cuba.

Según Weisbrot, son solicitudes enteramente razonables, dado que Estados Unidos, siendo la fuerza ocupante de la Isla a inicios del siglo XX, forzó a Cuba a que le concediera permiso para establecer la base militar en 1903, como una de las condiciones sine-qua-non para acceder a su “independencia”.

Agréguese -señala Weisbrot- que aún sin tomar en cuenta la manera en que se originó

other's struggles, that we as an antiwar movement can become a stronger and more effective force. Despite differences which may exist, from organizational to political perspectives, if a organization or community is working on an issue that we as an antiwar organization can agree with it is our obligation to support and show solidarity! Unity in action must always be a principle which we strive for and seek to strengthen.

Our struggle must be International

Our unity in action against the war at home and abroad must also transcend borders, especially between the U.S. and Canada. The government of Canada has been complicit in every war and occupation led by the U.S. and as they work together, the antiwar movement must also work for unity across borders in order to be effective. MAWO has taken every opportunity to collaborate with antiwar groups internationally, especially in the United States. This includes everything from organizing cross-border conferences with speakers and participants from Canada and the U.S. to joining in international days of action against war. In our history MAWO has worked with groups including the International ANSWER, the International Action Center, and is also a member of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). We have also worked together with international groups on specific campaigns, such as the campaign against imperialist meddling and sanctions on Iran, when we worked with the U.S.-based Stop War on Iran Coalition and Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI). MAWO has also worked to send organizers to participate and speak representing the peace movement in Canada at major antiwar events such as the protests against NATO in Chicago in 2013 that had 15,000 people marching through the streets and the support rally for Wikileaks whistleblower Chelsea Manning in Ft. Meade, Maryland during her sentencing.

Effective Antiwar Organizing is Independent

From its foundation MAWO has established itself as a broad and independent organization, not tied to any political party. This means that our antiwar positions and actions are not dictated by any particular party line, but remain uncompromisingly antiwar and anti-occupation. This also means that MAWO is open for anyone from any political tendency or ideology to participate in and organize with, as long as they can agree on the basis of fighting against imperialist war and occupation.

This independent position has helped MAWO to grow into an organization that is broad and inclusive, with an outlook that antiwar politics

are in everyone's interest and are everyone's business. In order to reach more communities MAWO has been all over British Columbia, from downtown Vancouver rallies to Osoyoos peace walks, Surrey libraries to Ladner high schools, joining Muslim community gatherings and participating in Latin American festivals, standing in solidarity with Indigenous protests and jamming at progressive hip hop shows. The result has been that looking around any MAWO event, action or meeting you can find that MAWO is a diverse mix of many ethnic communities and ideologies, and with students, youth and elders working together.

Looking Back, Moving Forward

In the 12 years since MAWO formed, and the



MAWO's Hip Hop for Peace Festival!

14 years of the new era of war and occupation, imperialist attacks have not only spread to more and more countries, they are also constantly changing their vicious methods in an attempt to stop antiwar sentiment from growing at home. This changing face of war has brought new challenges for antiwar organizing with more and more sophisticated media manipulation providing cover for new attacks. These brutal and inhuman attacks have included drone bombing campaigns, the covert fomenting of civil wars as in Syria or the U.S.-backed Saudi Arabian bombing of Yemen in which imperialist governments are using a proxy to carry out their bloody attacks.

These new methods of war are partly in response to a growing antiwar sentiment in the U.S. and Canada. More and more it is becoming clear to people living in imperialist countries that wars and occupations abroad are not in their interests. It is not only in polls published in major media sources that we see the rise in antiwar sentiment, but through our grassroots organizing in campuses, community centres and on the streets that MAWO has been able to gauge and observe this growing sentiment. It is this growing sentiment which gives the antiwar movement the potential to grow into an effective force, if combined with a clear political direction and leadership.

Looking at antiwar organizing in Canada we cannot help but to recognize that antiwar organizing has largely disappeared except for some select cities where antiwar action is more consistent. Given the growing antiwar sentiment and amazing potential to act against war that people in Canada have demonstrated, such as in the mass protests against the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, there is no excuse to justify such a low level of action today. MAWO has always stood for unity in building an antiwar movement in Canada against the Canadian war drive, while maintaining a strong international perspective.

Now More Than Ever – Join the Struggle to End War and Occupation

As the new Liberal government takes power in Canada, it also gives us the opportunity to increase our antiwar organizing and raise our voices even louder. We must remember that it was under the Liberal government of Jean Chretien that Canada joined in the occupation of Afghanistan in 2001. With the Liberal party and Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister, we can expect nothing short of a pro-war government that will continue to keep Canada on the international stage, although with a different face.

MAWO formed in order to take up consistent and clear opposition to war. 12 years on, we have remained consistent and will continue to educate, organize and mobilize against war and occupation. We

encourage all peace-loving people to join MAWO and poor and oppressed people around the world in the fight against war and occupation at home and abroad. For more about MAWO's upcoming events and ways to get involved visit www.mawovancouver.org or follow us on Twitter @mawovan.

Self-determination for Indigenous Nations and All Oppressed Nations!

End Wars and Occupations!

Money for Education, Housing and Jobs, Not for War!

continued from page 17

terrorists, this is [the] wrong strategy.”

What is the Solution, Political or Military?

The latest round of negotiations held in Geneva, were much like their predecessors: more fanfare and talks with no significant actions or concrete plan to fight terrorism

and bring peace back to Syria. Unlike Russia and Iran, the U.S., its imperialist allies and its proxy groups have no interest in bringing peace and stabilizing the situation in Syria. Their participation in those political moves is not more than a strategy to pressure the Syrian government and buy more space for their proxy rebel forces to better organize themselves.

Terrorism needs to be wiped out of Syria and Iraq. An organized military action plan coordinated with the government of Syria and Iraq is needed to fight against such brutal and atrocious terrorist groups like ISIS/ISIL and Al Nusra Front. The priority now in Syria needs to be to militarily defeat of ISIS/ISIL and other Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups. Demanding the overthrow of the Syrian government is equal to calling for more local and regional destabilization of the region which will create a political vacuum and space for organized terrorist groups like ISIS/ISIL to take advantage of the situation, therefore intensifying the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq. Remember what happened to Libya!

We say yes for a political solution to bring peace to the Syrian internal conflict but only after defeating and eradicating ISIS/ISIL and Al-Qaeda affiliated groups. Anything else is just a continuation of the present situation. The questions are very clear after doing some critical thinking: Who really represents the so-called opposition groups and how influential and popular are they in Syria? Is it possible to stabilize Syria with a weak and fragmented opposition? Is it really possible to form a coalition with the terrorist groups in Syria? Even if a coalition of Syrian government and opposition groups is possible, how do they deal with two-thirds of Syria in the hand of various terrorist groups?



As The New Era of War and Occupation Continues, So Does Vancouver's Struggle to End it. Mobilization Against War and Occupations continues to educate, organize and mobilize for peace!

By Sarah Alwell

Usually when you walk the streets of Vancouver's downtown core, you can hear the bustle of street vendors, the chatter outside coffee shops and the music of street performers. But once a month there is a different voice that fills the downtown air, and it's mad as hell.

It's the voice of Vancouver's antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), and in this new era of war and occupation the reasons to be outraged are only growing.

Over the last month the people of Palestine have intensified their protest and resistance to the Israeli occupation. They have been marching in tens of thousands throughout all of Palestine in the face of increased Israeli attacks and the constant violence, harassment and humiliation caused by the occupation, already 48 Palestinians have been killed. The crisis of refugees fleeing from the Middle East and Africa to Europe has also continued, bringing into focus the harsh and tragic result of over 14 years of the new era of war and occupation. Countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen which have been the target of imperialist war, occupation and foreign intervention are now so dangerous and unlivable that their people have no other choice but to risk their lives and become refugees.

That's why, on October 26th, dozens of peace-loving people gathered in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery for MAWO's monthly antiwar rally and petition drive. With bright picket signs and colourful banners that read "Self-Determination

for Palestine!", "Hands Off Syria!" and "End the Occupations Now!", petition signatures were collected, hundreds of informational leaflets were handed out and many conversations were had with passers-by, calling for an immediate end to imperialist war and occupation.

This month's antiwar rally and petition drive was followed by a more creative and different kind of action. Now, towards the end of October Vancouver becomes very familiar with pumpkins, ghouls, tricks and treats. Well all of these were to be found at Joe's Cafe on the eve of October 30th as MAWO marked something much greater than Halloween. This was the date that MAWO marked 12 years of consistent and active antiwar organizing in an evening, not accidentally, titled MAWO 12th Anniversary. Surrounded by glowing ghosts and miniature frankensteins, antiwar banners and dozens of posters representing the hundreds of events organized over the years, MAWO supporters and organizers reflected on the last 12 years of fighting for peace with photo slide-shows, poetry, live music, and a vow to never give up, giving a whole new, and more important, meaning to this time of year.

As threats to human life around the world continue at the hands of the imperialist war mongers, MAWO continues to educate, organize and mobilize against war and for peace.

For more information or to get involved please visit the website: www.mawovancouver.org

Working and Oppressed People Unite to Build a Peace and Antiwar Movement

The last 14 years proved that imperialist countries such as the U.S., Canada, U.K and France don't shy away from allying themselves with despotic and brutal regimes such as Saudi Arabia or even directly with terrorist groups. All that matters to them is if these alliances serve and advance the interests of imperialist countries. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya were completely destroyed by imperialists so called "humanitarian interventions" and "democracy building" projects. Today we must stand with the Syrian government and the Syrian people against any further imperialist interventions and U.S. backed terrorism. The brave people of Syria have the right to decide who their friend is, who their enemy is or who they want to lead their country without imperialist intervention for plundering their resources and dictating them their fate. The antiwar movement around the world must continue campaigning "U.S. out of the Middle East and Africa". "Bring the troops home now" is more relevant than ever. "Self-determination for all oppressed nations and countries" must be our guideline to defend humanity and civilization. We must continue to demand, "imperialists, Turkey, Saudi and GCC hands off Syria!" And "no to terrorism by imperialist countries and their puppets!"



20,000 Palestinians citizens of Israel march in Sakhnin in the Galilee calling for an end to Israel's occupation - 11 October 2015.

Palestinians is a direct result of 67 years of Israel's brutal occupation of historic Palestine, as well as imposing all kind of inhuman, racist measures and conditions on all Palestinians from the border of Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, From Lebanon to Egypt. In case you are wondering: What I am saying is that the killing of any innocent Israeli as well as any Palestinian is the result of the same culprit. Israel is responsible for both. Israel's Zionist rulers created the conditions for this to happen.

1, 2, 3... Many Intifadas! Support Self-determination of Palestinian!

The Intifada is a strong uplift in the struggle of Palestinian people for liberation. They have received support and solidarity from peace-loving people around the world to their legitimate claim to all of their territory and self-determination. The Palestinian cause has won the hearts of countless millions in the Middle East and North Africa especially but around the world as well. But verbal, written or online protest has not been enough to undo the Zionist project of total occupation of Palestine.

It is not hard to understand Palestinian reaction to Israel once we can see their conditions more clearly. All Palestinians are prisoners. And Israel has two types of prisons: The one that every Palestinian lives in simply for having been born, and the one they are put in for striking

back at the prison system, inequality and injustice.

The majority of Jewish people and their Palestinian sisters and brothers want essentially the same thing. They both want peace and security, a good life for them and their families. With that in mind I argue we have a lot more in common than we have apart. The myth that Jews and Palestinians can not live together is proven historically false. Black and White and Brown all live peacefully in South Africa's post apartheid regime. Palestinian and Jewish people have much better history and condition to live together peacefully than South African. Before the British Belfore Declaration in

1917 to increase hostility between Jewish settlers and Palestinians, and before the creation of the racist Zionist state of Israel in 1948, these two great people as well as all different faith believers lived side by side for centuries as one unit in Palestine. Today after more than 35 years of fruitless peace negotiations, ever more expansion of Jewish settlements, 3 heroic Intifadas and the creation of the Apartheid Wall, a One State solution seems the only viable alternative to this blood shed and ever increasing conflict and fear mongering among Jewish and Palestinian people.

Let us all support the Palestinian Third Intifada! Let's build a solidarity movement with Palestinians! Let's make this the last Intifada! Let's support the Right of Return for all Palestinians! Jewish people and their Palestinian sisters and brothers should join together to defeat the racist, Zionist state of Israel! Let's End the Occupation! Let's support Self-Determination for Palestine! For many centuries Muslims, Christians and Jewish people lived together under one sky. We can do it today too.



A young Palestinian hurling stones on Friday at an Israeli Army bulldozer during a protest against Israeli settlements in the village of Kofr Qadom near the West Bank city of Nablus

2015

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significantly reduced transfer payments to the provinces for healthcare and education.

More recently, Trudeau's campaign co-chair was forced to resign after being caught advising oil industry executives during the election campaign on how to win quick approval of a massive tar sands pipeline in Canada. Also, one of Trudeau's frontrunners for a Cabinet position as Minister of Public Safety is Bill Blair. Blair was the Toronto police chief during the G20 summit in June 2010 which saw the police violate civil rights, detain people illegally, and use excessive force. More than 1,100 people were arrested, the largest mass arrest in Canadian history.

When NDP leader Thomas Mulcair criticized Pierre's Trudeau's use of the War Measures Act and military in 1970, Justin Trudeau responded by saying, "Let me say very clearly: I am incredibly proud to be Pierre Elliot Trudeau's son and am incredibly lucky to have been raised with those values."

So, where is that "Real Change" again?

Our Power Lies in Our Own Organizing

History has shown us time and time again that our strength lies not in voting for a political party or a specific candidate once every four years, but when poor and working people are active in the political process in a united and consistent way. Most recently the 2009 election of

Barack Obama, the first black President of the United States, caught many social movements and progressive organizations flat footed. They waited, and waited for Obama to come through on promises he made during the campaign. He did not close Guantanamo Bay prison, he did not end US wars abroad, he did not narrow the gap between rich and poor...among countless other promises. We do not have time to waste waiting for Justin Trudeau, or any other elected leader to magically or benevolently fix all of the problems they have created for us. If it were that easy, the significant movement which originally organized against Bill C-51 would have already defeated it.

For Halloween in 2015, Justin Trudeau dressed up as Han Solo and posed for photos for the media. Dressing up as a rebel hero from the Star Wars movies is one thing, acting like one in real life is another entirely. Unfortunately we do not live in fantasy, and Bill C-51 is a very real attack on our democratic and human rights. This is a defining moment in Canadian political history, and will set an important precedent in the fights for the democratic and human rights of poor and working people in Canada. We say once again: If Justin Trudeau really wants to show, "Real Change" he will immediately Repeal Bill C-51. We need to continue to educate, organize and mobilize to make this message loud and clear. We don't accept half of our human rights, or even a partial attack on our civil liberties. We demand an immediate Repeal of Bill C-51!

revolution."

U.S. Hands of Venezuela!

Looking at Venezuela's recent history, it is clear that the U.S. government and their capitalist allies and their violent right-wing opposition in Venezuela are looking for every opportunity to overthrow the government of President Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution.

Recent polls in Venezuela suggest that the PSUV and Bolivarian Revolution will once again be victorious. The majority of people that support the Revolutionary government of Venezuela certainly don't want to see the gains made by poor and working people in Venezuela reversed. No matter what the outcome of the parliamentary elections is on December 6, it is our vital responsibility to continue educating people abroad, especially here in Canada, and the United States, about the revolutionary Bolivarian process in Venezuela and continue organizing in solidarity with the people of Venezuela.

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Our mothers and fathers invested sweat and blood. Three hundred and ten years we worked in this country without a dime in return—I mean without a dime in return. You let the white man walk around here talking about how rich this country is, but you never stop to think how it got rich so quick. It got rich because you made it rich.

You take the people who are in this audience right now. They're poor. We're all poor as individuals. Our weekly salary individually amounts to hardly anything. But if you take the salary of everyone in here collectively, it'll fill up a whole lot of baskets. It's a lot of wealth. If you can collect the wages of just these people right here for a year, you'll be rich—richer than rich. When you look at it like that, think how rich Uncle Sam had to become, not with this handful, but millions of black people. Your and my mother and father, who didn't work an eight-hour shift, but worked from "can't see" in the morning until "can't see" at night, and worked for nothing, making the white man rich, making Uncle Sam rich. This is our investment. This is our contribution, our blood.

Not only did we give of our free labor, we gave of our blood. Every time he had a call to arms, we were the first ones in uniform. We died on every battlefield the white man had...

I might stop right here to point out one thing. Whenever you're going after something that belongs to you, anyone who's depriving you of the right to have it is a criminal. Understand that. Whenever you are going after something that is yours, you are within your legal rights to lay claim to it.

Excerpt from Malcolm X speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" delivered 12 April, 1964 in Detroit

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the Bolivarian revolutionary process won 15 out of 16 elections and referendums held between 1998 and 2012. With the election of President Nicolás Maduro in 2013, the people of Venezuela secured yet another victory for their revolution.

This momentum has carried forward through to the Parliamentary elections, mass mobilizations, building mass popular institutions and volunteer democratic participation, which the majority of people in Venezuela see as an affirmation of their support for the Bolivarian revolution. The outstanding participation in the primary elections for the PSUV has shown that a majority of Venezuelan people support the Bolivarian revolution despite the economical war waged by pro imperialist capitalist establishment of Venezuela against poor and working people. As one Venezuelan has said to Maduro, "We are here, we might be pissed off about something, but we are here with the

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are very familiar with. Everyone who travels to Cuba hears about the U.S. blockade on Cuba and you have to have been living under a rock to have not heard about the atrocities the U.S. government is committing in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

So in a lot of ways, while I feel like our job is more difficult, because I think that the blockade and the occupation of Guantanamo are things the U.S. government is very committed to continuing. I believe this will be an even more long-term struggle – of course, I hope I am wrong – but I also feel that we have a leg up that we did not have during our fight for the Cuban 5 because of the common knowledge that already exists out there in society in Canada and in the U.S. [...]

We need to understand why we are celebrating this reestablishment of US-Cuba relations, and why this is a historic victory for Cuba, I believe, because it legitimizes so many things that Cuba has been fighting for so many years. Cuba has been saying: 'we are not a state sponsor of terrorism' and finally the U.S. government has had to admit that. Cuba said: 'the Cuban 5 are innocent and deserve to be free' and finally the U.S. government had to let them go. Cuba has stood up against the blockade and said: 'this is a policy that is unjust' and while the U.S. government won't fully admit that yet, they have had to reverse course on a lot of their policies towards Cuba because the US understands that the policies are not in their benefit anymore.

Like I said, Cuba is well aware that the United States government, whether Republican or Democrat, is no friend of the Cuban people or their socialist revolution. But Cuba has done the math, and weighed the pros and the cons and they believe that they have more to gain from this reestablishment of U.S.-Cuba relations than to lose, which I agree with.

We also have to understand that having representatives of the Cuban revolution, of the people of Cuba sitting in the heart of the empire, in the Cuban Embassy is pretty special. These are people who are representing oppressed people around the world in the heart of the empire and standing up for a better future and the better world that we believe in. In many ways, that Cuban embassy represents a huge amount of hope.

So it is up to us to make sure that Cuba can

keep that embassy there and that embassy isn't just a hollow promise. But that really the U.S. is put in a position that they have to lift their blockade on Cuba, that they have to end their criminal "regime change" programs and where finally they have to remove their military presence from Guantanamo Bay. Thank you very much.



This Cuban Revolutionary Tradition Continues Today...

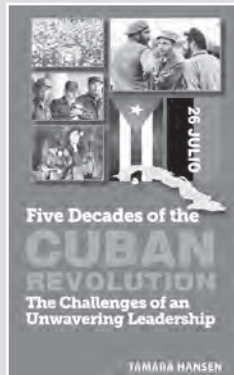
Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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OUR HERITAGE



Alexandra Kollontai

1872-1952

Russian revolutionary leader

The women who took part in the Great October Revolution – who were they? Isolated individuals? No, there were hosts of them; tens, hundreds of thousands of nameless heroines who, marching side by side with the workers and peasants behind the Red Flag and the slogan of the Soviets, passed over the ruins of tsarist theocracy into a new future...

If one looks back into the past, one can see them, these masses of nameless heroines whom October found living in starving cities, in impoverished villages plundered by war... A scarf on their head (very rarely, as yet, a red kerchief), a worn skirt, a patched winter jacket... Young and old, women workers and soldiers' wives peasant women and housewives from among the city poor. More rarely, much more rarely in those days, office workers and women in the professions, educated and cultured women. But there were also women from the intelligentsia among those who carried the Red Flag to the October victory – teachers, office employees, young students at high schools and universities, women doctors. They marched cheerfully, selflessly, purposefully. They went wherever they were sent. To the front? They put on a soldier's cap and became fighters in the Red Army. If they put on red arm-bands, then they were hurrying off to the first-aid stations to help the Red front against Kerensky at Gatchina. They worked in army communications. They worked cheerfully, filled with the belief that something momentous was happening, and that we are all small cogs in the one class of revolution.

In the villages, the peasant women (their husbands had been sent off to the front) took the land from the landowners and chased the aristocracy out of the nests they had roosted in for centuries.

Excerpt from *Selected Articles and Speeches*, Progress Publishers, 1984

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many of those are unfinished, inaccessible, or so understaffed they cannot function. Hospitals have been built here and there as well – but again, are often undersupplied, understaffed, or inaccessible.

Yes, Afghanistan faces many challenges. But after a decade and a half of occupation by the militaries of some of the wealthiest countries in the world, one must ask why even the most basic human needs are still not being met. And if a war this long has failed to improve the lives of Afghans, can we really expect that yet another extension of the war will solve the problem?

**Tragedy of Afghanistan:
An Imperialist Project**



The U.S. occupation has left a legacy of death and destruction across Afghanistan.

The official reasoning for the extension of the mission in Afghanistan is to support and train the Afghan National Security Forces, which are not strong enough to maintain the security situation in the country without foreign support.

However, the truth is that 'security situation' in the country even now with 17,000 NATO troops and more than 30,000 contractors is tenuous at best. The Taliban control many parts of the country; warlords control most others. The US-backed Afghan government has little real power outside of Kabul, and faces attacks even there. The Afghan National Security Forces are weak, plagued by low recruitment numbers and desertions. There is little possibility of it being able to fend off Taliban attacks without foreign support anytime soon.

Like other foreign powers which tried to occupy Afghanistan before them, the US

and NATO are facing a no-win situation in Afghanistan. The tenacity of the Afghan resistance to foreign occupiers has proved too much for even the greatest military powers in the world.

However, the US and NATO do not need to completely control Afghanistan in order to achieve their real objectives there. By maintaining a constant military presence in the country – even if it is shared with the Taliban – they can defend their military, strategic, and economic interests in the region. The indefinite presence of troops will essentially turn the country into a US/NATO base of operations.

Today, the US and their allies face growing competition for global political and

economic power from emerging powers such as Russia and China. With Russia in particular playing a larger military role in the Middle East, the United States and their allies in NATO are doing all they can to make sure they maintain a permanent presence in the Middle East and Central Asia. Doing so will allow US corporations unhindered access to important resources and trade markets in the region and give the US military an upper hand over their global competitors.

A permanent US/NATO presence in Afghanistan also allows them to continue their policy of restricting the influence of Iran in the region. Since the revolution of 1979, Iran has remained a thorn in the side of the US by pursuing a policy of independence and anti-imperialism, and providing an example for other countries who would do the same.

Only Way Forward is to End the

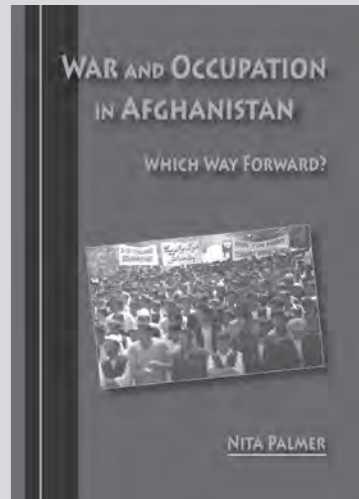
Occupation

The problems facing Afghanistan, such as the lack of basic human rights, women's rights, or democracy cannot be solved by foreign occupation forces, no matter how long the mission goes on, how many boots are on the ground, or how many billions are spent. It is simply not in the interest of foreign forces to do so. The only real progress for Afghanistan will come from Afghans themselves coming together to decide the future of their country. And given their long and proud history of defying foreign interference, that future would be unlikely to involve US interests.

If the US and NATO countries were truly interested in helping the Afghan people, they would pull all troops and contractors out of the country immediately, rather than extending this tragedy and suffering. Those around the world who stand on the side of peace, democracy, and human rights should stand with the Afghan people in demanding their self-determination and the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces.

Battle of Ideas Press

**WAR AND OCCUPATION
IN AFGHANISTAN
WHICH WAY FORWARD?**



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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